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## The Life-Story of a Devonshire Ghost.

THE life-story of a lady—or gentleman either, for that matter—with a ghost, is generally worth the telling. Common-place, every-day, bread-and-butter people do *not* have ghosts *at all*. But a person who lived and died a long time ago, and whose ghost still flits on summer nights over moon-lit meadows, or, on winter ones, battles against the storm, as it sweeps across mountain and moor—probably did in his, or her day, something, or many things, very good, or very bad ; so that such person's biography is generally worthy of attention.

For these reasons let us speak for a while about Mary Fitz, of Fitzford, in Devonshire whose ghost nightly seats itself in a coach made of human bones—the bones of her four husbands, all murdered by her—and rides from Fitzford gateway to Okehampton Castle, followed by a hound. Arrived there, the lady, or the hound—there is some difference of opinion as to which does it—plucks a blade of grass ; then the *cortège* wends its way home again, where the blade of grass is laid upon a particular stone. This will be done, night after night, till every blade of grass in Okehampton Park is plucked or — the world ends !

If you disbelieve the story—and some people are *so* sceptical—go one night either to Fitzford or Okehampton, or to any place along the road between the two, and see for yourself, the “old lady,” as she is called, drawn, as described, by headless horses, and pioneered by the proverbial black dog with a fiery eye—he has but one and that is in the centre of his forehead. Perhaps, if she sees you, she will ask you to ride with her, and if you accept no doubt you will then learn the reason for this wearisome penance. But think twice before you accept her ladyship's invitation, for no one who has done so is known to have survived the ordeal of learning Mary's story from the lips of Mary's ghost !

That being so, we must find it out ourselves, and, thanks to a most delightfully written communication to the Devonshire

Association by Mrs. G. H. Radford, this is now a comparatively easy task.

Mary Fitz was born at Walreddon, in Devonshire, on the 1st of August, 1596. Her father, Sir John Fitz, was then just twenty-one years of age and "a very comely person." Of course, he was a spendthrift—good-looking heirs always are, and had a sober and frugal father—they always have. It chanced one day, some three years after his little daughter's birth, that he was dining with many of his neighbours at Tavistock. Boasting the "free tenure of his land," he exclaimed that he "held not a foot of land of any but the Queen." Said Master Nicholas Stanning, who was among the diners, there was a little bit of land which Sir John held of *him*, for the which no rent was asked on account of their long acquaintance. Only mutual friends prevented bloodshed then and there, and before nightfall it had taken place, and the blood spilt was that of Master Nicholas, who had been followed by Fitz on his road home, and lay lifeless on the way from Tavistock to Brockleigh, whilst his murderer was hastening to the sea-shore to take passage abroad. Local tradition makes the gateway of Fitzford the scene of Stanning's murder.

Fitz stayed in France some years and came back under cover of a pardon for his crime. But this did not clear him of a claim on the part of Stanning's children for the loss of their father; it was duly lodged, and to answer it, Sir John set off for London in no good humour. The long, lonely ride—he was accompanied by but one servant—weighed upon his troubled mind, and at last—when so near town as Twickenham—rising one night from a feverish sleep, he murdered his host, wounded the host's wife, and stabbed himself. Twickenham parish register thus records his interment: "Sir John Fitz of Fitzford, in the Countie of Devon, knight, was buried the 10th day of August, 1605."

Mary Fitz, then nine years and one week old, was living with her mother and grandmother in Devonshire. The news of her father's untimely decease would, of course, reach London before it would the distant West, and as the King lost no time in disposing of Mary's wardship, which, with a property like hers, was worth having, it is probable that Lady Fitz learnt that she would have to part with her daughter, almost, if not quite, as



soon as she did the tidings of her husband's death. Mary's "purchaser" was the Earl of Northumberland, and the sum he paid for her was £450. In 1608 she married the Earl's brother, Sir Allan Percy, he a man of thirty-one, she a child of twelve. We know what these marriages meant, they were but an "incident"—as legal writers put it—in feudalism. The whole arrangement was a matter of "£ s. d." But it is a mistake to imagine that they were marriages only in name; a careful working out of dates will show you that there were plenty of child-mothers in the ranks of the English aristocracy in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Perhaps in the seventeenth there were fewer. At all events in the case of Mary Fitz there is no evidence to show that she ever lived with Sir Allan as his wife. She resided after marriage, as she had done before, since her sale, with Lady Elizabeth Hatton.

Sir Allan loved sport, and sport took his life as it too often does that of its friends. Heated with the chase, he lay down on the ground to rest and cool himself, and in so doing caught a chill, from which he died in November, 1612—"went away in his sleepe," says a contemporary writer.

Thus, before she was sixteen, Mary became a widow for the first time, and a rich minor-heiress was again in the market of the Court of Wards. She had £700 a year in land, besides property in houses, flocks, herds and other desirable "stock," and last, but not least, even in those sordid days, she was very beautiful. Letters of the time speak of the "great suing" for the late Sir Allan's lady, and tell how Sir Walter Cope "hath been already employed to the Lady Hatton at Stoke Pogis in the behalfe of Sir Thomas Howard," third son of the Earl of Suffolk; but it was the common report that she was reserved for "young Lord St. John, or one of his brethren," Lady Hatton's nephews. That being so, why did her ladyship leave rich, beautiful and widowed Mary in London alone whilst she went to look after property in the country? Perhaps she went to bring up her nephew to London, and perhaps Mary knew it, and thought it best to make her own matrimonial arrangements this time. Anyway, this is what she did—as told in a news-letter to Sir Dudley Carleton in December, 1611. "Sir Allan Percy is gone the way of all flesh, dying; his lady, the way of all quick flesh, having stolen out of my Lady Elizabeth Hatton's house in London in the edge

of an evening and coupled herself in marriage with Mr. Darcy, my Lord Darcy's eldest son." Thus Mary became a wife for the second time. We do not learn what Lady Hatton thought of this runaway match. Whatever may have been her feelings, she kept them to herself. Certainly she could not have objected to the marriage on the score of the husband's position, for his father was "well in" with the court.

Of Mary's married life as Mistress Darcy we know nought, save that it was very short. Only a few months after marriage her second husband was laid under the sod, and by the time she was sixteen, she had been taken to wife for a third time. Her new husband was Sir Charles Howard, son to the Earl of Suffolk, and so brother to Sir Thomas, who was talked of as a suitor for her, just before her flight with young Darcy.

The marriage took place in 1612, and the couple resided at Audley End, which was nearing completion. Here, "upon St. Matthew's Day, at night, being the 21st day of September, 1613," Mary's first child was born, and a fortnight after was baptized, in Saffron Walden Church, as Elizabeth Howard. There is not much known of the married life of Sir Charles and his lady. Soon after Elizabeth's birth they moved to London, and here, in all probability, their other child, Mary, was born. Lord Suffolk fell into pecuniary difficulties after being fined £30,000 in the Star Chamber for alleged embezzlement, and his impecuniousness appears to have been shared by his son, who sold all he could of Mary's property, and died in September, 1622.

During her third widowhood, Mary resided mostly in London; for the first two or three years of it she was busy with the lawyers. By her settlement, on marrying Sir Charles, she was to have £600 a year jointure, and her daughters, if she had any, £1,000 on marriage, or on coming of age. This was all very nice on parchment, but when it came to be carried out, Sir Charles' lands were found so encumbered that even the £600 a year could not be raised. The widow moved the Court of Chancery, and the Court of Chancery gave judgment in her favour in 1628. She got £1,500 arrears down, and £600 a year in cash till a jointure worth that sum was settled upon her.

One who interested himself on Mary's behalf throughout the progress of this Chancery suit was Sir Richard Grenville, grandson of his namesake, who had fought the notable fight in the

*Revenge*, and in 1628 she married him. Born in 1600, he was four years her junior, but what of that? He had fought under Prince Maurice, proved himself a valiant soldier, and won the favour of the Duke of Buckingham. All which was, no doubt, pointed out and made the most of by "Stenie," when he pressed Sir Richard's claims; and, says Lord Clarendon, it prevailed with the "rich widow . . . who had been a lady of extraordinary beauty, which she had not yet outlived (she was then thirty-three), and though she had no great dower by her last husband . . . yet she inherited a fair fortune of her own, near Plymouth, and was looked upon as the richest match in the West."

They were married, probably in London, but were soon living together at Fitzford; and here, in May, 1630, a son was born to them, who was christened at Tavistock Church, after his father. So far all went well, but about this time Sir Richard's pockets running dry, he seems to have looked into his wife's settlements of her own property made before their marriage. These had been drawn on instructions which lead one to imagine that Mary had profited by experience gained during married life with numbers one, two, and three. Sir Richard waxed warm; he imprisoned her in "a corner" of the great house at Fitzford—her own house, too—and kept her without necessary provision. He called in his own aunt to be "the lady of the house;" your husband's aunt to manage your own establishment! Unbearable! She appealed to the justices, to whom he could not justify his conduct, but contented himself with calling her "bad names." They granted her an allowance for necessary provision, and bound him to be "of good behaviour" towards her. But he did not heed this binding, and "the Earl of Suffolk's man" was sent to Fitzford to bring Mary back to London along with him to the Earl's house, where she lived for some time.

Sir Richard called the Earl "a base Lord." The Earl said the baseness was on Sir Richard's side, and proved his assertion in the Court of Star Chamber, which judicial body mulcted Sir Richard in a fine of £8,000—£4,000 to the King, and £4,000 to the Earl. Needless to say, the fine was *not* paid, and Sir Richard went to the Fleet.

Safe in Suffolk House, Mary would say more than she dared to write, and what she said, no doubt, influenced her brother-in-

law to persuade her to take stronger measures against her husband. On the 9th of February, 1631-2, she was a suitor in the Court of High Commission for a divorce, *à mensâ et thoro*, from Sir Richard. Here are some of the charges which she brought against him: "He gave directions to one of his servants to burne horse-haire, wooll, feathers, and parings of horse-hoofes, and to cause the smoke to goe into the ladye's chamber, through an hole made in the plaistering, out of the kitchen. He broke up her chamber doore, and came into her chamber at night with a sword drawn. For the key of his closett, which she had taken away and denyed to give him, he took hold of her petty-coate, and tore it, and threw her on the ground, being with childe, he did threaten her that she should not have her oune midwife, but one of his own providing." One witness deposed that on the occasion of her "overthrow," he made her eye "blackened and blewe."

This is Sir Richard's version of the story: "That his lady had often 'carried herself' unseemly, both in wordes and deedes towards him, 'and sunge unseemly songs to his face to provoke him.' She called him 'poore rogue,' and 'pretty fellow'; she reminded him that he had not ten groats in his pocket when he married her. She 'swore the peace against him without cause.'" And then, to show she meant the last epithet "sarcastic," as Artemus Ward used to say, she said he was an "ugly fellow," and on going from home, she said "the devill and sixpence goe with you, and soe ye shall lack neither money nor company." He denied the midwife story. He said the holes were made in the kitchen wall (*sic*) by the lady herself, or her daughter, in order, apparently, that they might hear what passed between the servants. As for her incarceration, there was not much hardship in that, for she had ten rooms at pleasure. In conclusion, he says how ready he is to dwell with her again.

With this plea and the answer to it, it is not quite clear why a *divorce* was asked for. It was not granted, but the Court thought "There was such a breach made, that it was not like they could forgett it easily," and that it was not "fitt to compell her to live with him, and therefore [she] to have one halfe of her meanes, being 700li. *per annum*."

Now, as we have said, Sir Richard, at this time, lay in the Fleet for debt—to wit, not paying the fine in which he had been

mulcted. And whilst he lay there, a charge against him for clipping and coining was investigated, which, if proved, would not have increased the lustre of his fame; as it was, he did not come quite cleanly out of it. Sir Francis Drake—odd, that one Armada hero should be employed on such a mission with respect to the grandson of another!—and William Strode visited Fitzford, searched the house, and examined everybody there, including Sir Richard's old aunt, who had been one of the thorns in Mary's flesh before she left home. Pincers, holdfasts, and files—one of the last had been much used for yellow metal—were found, but the evidence of Sir Richard's guilt was not sufficiently conclusive, and nothing more was done.

Meanwhile, Mary and her advisers were evidently dissatisfied with the financial arrangements in the deed of separation. She was, they said, under the protection of the Court of Wards, having omitted to sue out her livery, and she begged the Court's aid to take her own estate totally out of her husband's power. This was done. What wonder then that Sir Richard, now without prospect of paying himself out of the Fleet, "gave himself liberty," and "went into the Swede's service in Germany." This was on the 17th October, 1633; and he stayed away from England some seven years.

These years of grass-widowhood, Mary spent partly in London and partly with her brother-in-law, Lord Suffolk, her children with her the while. She was seldom at Fitzford; her agent, George Cutteford, who lived at Walreddon, looked after the Devonshire property, and kept up a pretty active correspondence with Mary. Thanks be to him, for her answers tell of her doings, and throw some light on her story and character. Hitherto, we have learnt little of either from herself. George was a faithful steward, and his fidelity was certainly rewarded by his mistress's love and extreme friendship, which reveals itself in her persistent address of him by a pet name, manufactured by cutting off the last syllable of Cutteford, turning the first letter of the remaining part into a "G," and adding an "S" to the whole—it may not sound pretty to modern ears, but, no doubt, George appreciated the regard it betokened, especially when prefaced by some such adjective as "honest," "good," or the like.

Everything was referred to "Guts." Mary's uncle was



"damnable angry" about her dealings with some property in which he had an interest, and sent her "such a breakfast" on the subject—a curious allusion that, to the antiquity of the system of a general morning delivery of letters.

The London table was kept furnished with Devonshire fare. "Honest Guts," she writes in one letter, "I pray send me a whole flitch of bacon up, and some tongues, and four turkeys, many boned and baked together, two upon one another, with their breasts together and a piece of fat, thin [cut] pork between them."

There is a curious passage in this letter; it runs thus: "I thank you for the letter whose advice I wish I had ever followed, but awful experience has made me wiser," and quickly following this, comes another letter to "Guts," which refers to a communication received by her at Lulworth, which so alarmed her that she dared neither "go abroad, nor do anything," since "*he*, that values not his own life, has yours and mine in his keeping. Wherefore," she continues, "*as you love me, take some such course with Tom Robinson, as I may never be troubled with him more.*" She does not suggest a course; "Guts" knew what was "fittest" to be done for her "honour," in the matter; "but," she adds, "*make sure work with him that I may never hear more of him* . . . I tore this letter, but on better consideration I thought it fit to send you."

Soon after this, "Guts" came to London. Mary had written to him to express pleasure at the thought of their meeting, but this did not end so happily; perhaps he would not go so far as she desired to put Tom Robinson beyond the possibility of harm-doing. Any way, they parted in anger, and she sent a chiding letter after him, commencing, "Froward Guts," though in concluding it, she begged him not to keep angry with her who loved him; and presumably he did not keep so. This was at the beginning of the year 1639.

In the next letter she writes, she tells of her husband's return to England, and of his efforts at Court against her. So hopeful was he of the success of his efforts, that he actually went down to Fitzford, turned out the caretakers, and reinstated the old aunt—the thorn in Mary's flesh before alluded to. Well might Mary fall in poor spirits, for all this time she was "hard up." Almost every letter sent, had begged Cutteford to screw some-

thing out of the Devonshire tenants to send her; but now all hopes of supply from that quarter must cease. However, before long, Sir Richard was sent by the king to Ireland, and Fitzford was vacated by the tiresome aunt. When the civil war broke out, the taxation in London rose alarmingly, and Mary's case was hard indeed. Here is a letter, written by her in 1642, worth quoting.

"Honest Guts. I pray, as ever you love me, send me a bill for XX pounds, for God knows whether I shall live to have any more. Here is such hurly-burly, and all commodities are taken up; and this day the city has taken up all the provisions from the country people, that the suburbs can hardly provide themselves. Each man provides, that is able, for a quarter of a year. . . . For my part, I fear nothing but want of money. The king's army is a day's march before his citizens'. The king was yesterday five miles this side of Oxford. Mr. Charlwood wearies me to death for money. I pray, as you respect me, send me a bill of exchange for XX pound . . . All the shops are commanded to be shut up. The report here is that the armies have met, but no certainty who is killed, but I believe my lord of Essex has the worst, because I hear no crying of good news."

The fight 'twixt brother and brother had now begun in good earnest, and in the general hubbub, Mary's letters to "Guts" did not reach him, supposing she wrote any. She stayed in London as the place where she was least likely to be oppressed by Sir Richard Grenville, who had come home from Ireland, escaped from temporary arrest at Bristol, and entered the Parliament's service. There, on marching his troop straight to the king at Oxford, he earned for himself the titles "traytor, rogue, villain and skellum." His treachery was rewarded by the king's warrant to enter upon his wife's Devonshire estate, on the ground that her continued residence in the rebel city had made her a rebel; and in less than a fortnight after leaving London to fight the king, Sir Richard was at Tavistock, the king's friend, and armed with Prince Maurice's warrant to arrest "Guts," for withholding *his* rents from the Fitzford estate.

Poor "Guts"! His house was forcibly entered, his wife and

children "thrust out of doors," and the former, together with her lord, marched off to prison at Exeter. Meanwhile, Sir Richard went into residence at Fitzford, where he stayed till, on the approach of Essex's forces, he fled into Cornwall, leaving Fitzford almost undefended, for the Parliament men to enter and sack, which they did. But the success of Cromwell's arms in the West was but of short duration. Essex was defeated in Cornwall, and Sir Richard marched East again as far as Taunton, committing frequent acts of violence against those who had in anywise withstood him in his dealings with his wife, making the excuse that they were *enemies of the king!*

So many were the complaints of the West country people against him, that Prince Charles' council committed him prisoner, first to Launceston and then to St. Michael's Mount, from which place he was, however, allowed to escape into France.

Mary now lost no time in getting down to Fitzford to look after her estate, which certainly needed looking after; for "Guts," poisoned probably with the ill odours of Exeter jail, had been gathered to his fathers, and nothing had been done to make Fitzford rain or wind-tight since the siege.

Of course, there were plenty of arrears of rent to collect when Mary reached Fitzford; for, so the story ran, Sir Richard Grenville had impoverished everybody with his exactions. Now the faithful "Guts" was dead, Mary had to do all the ingathering herself. Not only had she lost the help of the Cutteford family, she had them now as her open enemies; for John Cutteford, the eldest surviving son, who had learnt a trade and dishonesty at Bristol, came back and prompted his widowed mother to set up a claim to Okehampton Park, which his late father had held in trust for his mistress. Mary thus expresses her opinion of this bit of "sharp" policy:

"MRS. CUTTEFORD,

"For a composition, I shall not deny it, upon a just account from you; as being executor to your late husband, you ought to give me and the lords (her trustees) up all those fines and rents he hath received to our use. But if you, or your son, think I desire, or will have, a composition without an

account of the monies your husband has received, you are deceived ; for I must enforce the account of them, though I desire, if you please, to have it in a fair way. . . . For the lease of Okehampton Park, I can prove it only a lease in trust, which, were your husband alive, he would confess."

In the end they went to law ; Mary won, and the Cuttefords, were ruined, having to quit Devonshire.

Now there lived with Mary all this time, besides her unmarried daughter, a certain " Mr. George Howard," *her son*, whose existence is a little embarrassing from the fact that Mary's husband, Sir Charles Howard, is distinctly stated to have died, " without heires male," in 1628. Some Devonshire historians make George Sir Charles's son, but it won't quite do, and there seems to be no help for keeping him out of the pedigree. The place and circumstances of his birth probably will remain a mystery, and as his only son died childless, more than a couple of centuries ago, the mystery is not worth an attempt at solution, though it is well just to bear in mind George's existence.

Soon after the law suit, George got married, and as the younger Mary had been taken to wife some time before, the elder Mary now led a solitary life at Fitzford. But she was not lonely for long. George's wedded life was short ; in two years he had " buried " his wife and their only child and was back again at Fitzford, looking after his mother's affairs and showing delicate little attentions to their vicar, as we see by the following clipped from the reverend gentleman's diary : " Mr. Howard sent me a little roll of tobacco. Oh, that God would show him mercy. Thou art, oh God, wonderful in counsel and mighty in working ! " Had the vicar offered special prayers for the comfort of this luxury which he could not afford to purchase ? Anyhow, he testified to his gratitude even more forcibly than by pious ejaculations ; he gave sixpence to Mr. Howard's boy who brought him the " baccy."

About this period, the eve of the Restoration, Sir Richard Grenville died, where, it is not known, but certainly abroad, and Mary became a widow for the fourth time. She was getting on in years, and probably on that account made over her property in Devonshire wholly to her son, who, by the way, was now M.P. for Tavistock, and so sometimes a resident in London. Still,

there he was, ready to run down to Fitzford should a tiresome tenant or refractory servant prove more than his mother could personally manage.

This being so, it is not hard to picture that the death of her right-hand man, and evidently a devoted son, was to the old lady, bedridden as she was, a terrible blow. It happened on the 17th of September, 1671, and just a month after, Mary bid farewell to a life, certainly eventful, and surely more troublesome than smooth.

And to whom, you will naturally ask, went the fair estates of the great Devonshire heiress who had, in her day, caused so many flutters "in the matrimonial market." Her first cousin, Courtenay of Powderham, was the fortunate man; and he got the estates and the money, save a few hundred pounds left to her daughter Mary on the condition that neither she nor her husband should claim any estate in the property bequeathed to Courtenay. No other member of the Fitz family—associated with men and women about Fitzford for two and a half centuries—got an acre of land or a penny of money. It was a harsh will, and one made, no doubt, under strong influence. But gentle reader, do not condemn Courtenay too harshly; he was very poor—and *he had nineteen children!*

What the Fitz family, and the neighbours, thought of the will, can be only conjectured. Mary Vernon, the married daughter, took out the necessary letters for the administration her mother's estates, three days after the death, presumably not knowing of the existence of the will; it must have been a disagreeable surprise for her, especially if she first learnt of it when she commenced to administer the estate. The administration grant is cancelled on the very day that her mother was buried. This was not till nearly a month after the death—a very unusual interval of time, and one which sets us wondering if there was really a very pretty family feud over the will; a feud in which the neighbours joined so heartily that the prudent father of nineteen, with whom all arrangements for the funeral rested—deemed it inexpedient to attempt so prominent an event as the burial of the Lady of Fitzford till the storm had cleared off a little. It is noteworthy that there is no monument to Mary Fitz. Perhaps the aforesaid prudent father remembered the old adage—"the least said the soonest mended," and so put over the resting



place of his benefactress no eulogy of her virtues ; or it is just possible, if such was set up, those who regarded Mary's actions in a different light, did away with it.

The latter class of persons certainly existed ; and to them we owe the ghost story, with which men, women, and children, in Devonshire, associate the name of Mary Fitz. A ghost story, strangely at variance—even as ghost stories go—with the incidents in the real life of its heroine. There is no reason whatever why the lady's coach should be made of the bones of her four husbands. True, she had four husbands, but clearly she never murdered any of them. Though perhaps the last did his best to deserve murder. As for the route taken by the coach of bones, there seems more reason for it. The action brought by Mary against Widow Cutteford, about the possession of Okehampton Park—in which the latter and her family were worsted, ruined, and driven out of Devonshire—was probably regarded by the neighbours, Mary being rich and the widow being poor, as a wicked action with an unjust termination and so, for it, Mary's ghost still performs its nightly penance in the *locus in quo*.

But that, it may be urged, is not enough to make her the perpetrator of four murders, or set going a ghost story that has held its ground for more than two and a half centuries.

Possibly not ; the evidence in the Okehampton Park dispute shows Mary to have been in the right, yet there were a good many incidents in her career in which she was not quite so much in the right. She did not scruple to squeeze extra rents and extra fines out of her tenants, when funds ran low ; and she was in strange dread of one Tom Robinson, who knew too much about *something*—something which concerned both herself and "honest Guts," to whom she suggested that Tom would be safer in another world. Perhaps he was sent thither before his time ; and if that be so, then we have a *foundation* for the murder story. Besides these things, there is the fact that Mary had a son whose father was not any one of her four husbands ; and in connection with this, it is as well to consider the intimacy and affection—certainly unusual as between landlady and bailiff—that existed between Mary and Cutteford. When this sprang up we have no means of ascertaining, but it is noteworthy that in the divorce proceedings in 1631-2, Sir Richard Grenville, in his answer

to Mary's complaint, is silent as to any *unfaithfulness* on her part.

So ends the life story of Mary Fitz of Fitzford. Perhaps its incidents are a trifle less tragic than those in the *ghost* story ; but her real history is certainly eventful and worth telling. It brings vividly before us the doings, and the hardships, of a rich ward, in days before the abolition of feudalism, and afterwards, of an active woman of rank during, and subsequent to, the Civil War.

W. J. HARDY.

## A Dreadful Night.

### A HUNTER'S TALE RETOLD.

By EDWIN LESTER ARNOLD.

ONLY he who has been haunted by a dream, a black horror of the night so real and terrible that many days of repugnance and effort are needed to purge the mind of its ugly details, can understand how a dream that was a fact—a horrible waking fantasy, grotesque and weird, a repetition in hard actuality of the ingenious terrors of sleep—clings to him who, with his faculties about him and all his senses on the alert, has experienced it.

Some five years ago I was hunting in the south-west corner of Colorado, where the great mountain spurs slope down in rocky ravines and gullies from the inland ranges towards the green plains along the course of the Rio San Juan. I had left my camp, late one afternoon, in charge of my trusty comrade, Will Hartland—a braver or more faithful little fellow by the way never put foot into a Mexican stirrup—and had wandered off alone into the scrub. Some five or six miles from the tents I stalked and wounded a prong-buck. He was so hard hit that I already smelt venison in the supper pot, and followed the broad trail he had left with the utmost eagerness. We crossed a couple of stony ridges with their deep intervening hollows, and came at last into a wild desolate gorge, full of loose rocks and bushes, and ribboned with game tracks, but otherwise a most desolate and God-forsaken place, where no man had been, or might come for fifty years. Here I sighted my venison staggering down the glen and dashed after it as fast as I could foot it, through the bushy tangles, and the dry, slippery, summer grass. In a few hundred yards the valley became a pass, and in a score more the steep bare sides had drawn in until they were walls on either hand, and the way trailed along the bottom of what was little better than a knife-cleft in the hills. I was a good runner, and the hunter blood was hot within me ; my moccasins flashed through the yellow herbage ; my cheeks burnt with excitement ; I dropped my gun to be the freer—the quarry was plunging along only ten yards ahead and seemed a certain victim ! In front was the

outing of that narrow ravine—the long reaches of the silver San Juan twining in countless threads through interminable leagues of pasture and forest beyond—I saw it all like a beautiful picture in the narrow black frame of the rocks; the evening wind blew softly up the canon, and the sky was already gorgeous and livid with the streaks of sunset! Another ten yards and we were flying down the narrowest part of the defile, the beast-path under our feet hardly a foot wide, and almost hidden by long, wiry dead grass. Suddenly the wounded buck, now within my grasp, staggered up on to its hind legs in a mad fit of terror, just as, with a shout of triumph, I leapt up to it, and in half a breathing space—in less time than it takes to write, but too late to stop my fatal rush—I and the stag were reeling on the very brink of a horrible funnel, a slippery yellow slope that had opened suddenly before us, leading down to a cavernous mouth, gaping, dark and dreadful in the heart of the earth. With a shout louder than my yell of triumph, staring at that horrible place, I threw up my hands and tried in vain to stop, it was too late, I felt my feet slip from under me, and the horrible attraction of that cruel trap drew me away, and in a second, shouting and plunging, and clutching at the rotten herbage, I was flying downwards. I caught a last glimpse of the San Juan twining pearly-pink under the sunset through leagues of green velvet verdure, and the blaze of the sky overhead crimson and green and sapphire, and then I was spinning into darkness, horrible Egyptian darkness, through which I fell for a giddy, senseless moment or two, and then landed with a thud which ought to have killed me but did not, bruised and nearly senseless, on a soft quaggy mound of something that seemed to sink under my weight like a feather bed.

So impossible does it seem to give an adequate idea in honest black and white of what followed, that I am half inclined to leave the task unattempted. Yet I will try, for my experiences were so strange and terrible that they deserve telling however poorly. My first sensation on recovering consciousness was that of an overpowering smell, a sickly, deadly taint in the air that there was no growing accustomed to, and which, after a few gasps, seemed to have run its deadly venom into every corner of my frame, and, turning my blood yellow, to have transformed my constitution into keeping with its own accursed nature. It was a damp,

musty, charnel-house smell, stale and wicked, with the breath of the slaughter-pit in it, an aroma of blood and corruption infinitely discomfoting. I sat up and glared about in the gloom, and then I carefully felt my limbs up and down. All were safe and sound, and I was unhurt, though as sore and bruised as though my body had stood a long day's pummelling. Next I groped round me in the pitchy dark, and soon touched the still warm body of the dead buck I had shot, and on which indeed I was sitting. Still feeling about, on the other side was something soft and furry too; I touched and patted it, and in a minute recognised with a start that my fingers were deep in the curly mane of a bull bison. I pulled, and the curly mane came off in stinking tufts, for that bull bison had been lying there six months or more. All about me, wherever I felt, was cold, clammy fur and hair and hoofs and bare ribs and bones mixed in dim confusion, and as that wilderness of death unfolded itself in the darkness to me, and the fetid close atmosphere mounted to my head, my strong nerves began to tremble like harp-strings in a storm, and my heart, that I had always thought terror-proof, to patter like a girl's.

Plunging and slipping I got upon my feet, and then became conscious of a dim circle of twilight far above, representing the hole through which my luckless self had fallen. It was fading in the twilight outside every moment, and was already so slightly luminous that my hand, held in front of me, looked ghostly and scarcely discernible. With a groan I began to explore slowly round the walls of my prison, and with a heart that grew sicker and sicker and sensations that you can imagine better than I can describe, I traced the jagged but unbroken circle of a great chamber in the underground, a hundred feet long, perhaps, by fifty across—a chamber with cruel, remorseless walls, that rose, sloping gently inwards from an uneven, horrible floor of hides and bones, to that narrow neck far overhead, where the stars were already twinkling in a cloudless sky. By this time I was fairly frightened, and alas! that it should be written, the cold perspiration of dread began to stand in beads upon my forehead.

A fancy then seized me that someone might be within hearing above. I shouted again and again, and listened acutely each time as the echoes of my shout died away. I could have sworn



something like the clash of ghostly teeth on teeth, something like the rattle of jaws in an ague fit, fell on the silence behind. With beating heart, and an undescrivable dread creeping over me, I crouched down in the gloom and listened. There was water dripping out in the dark, monotonous and dismal: and a sound like the breath from many husky throats away in the distance of the cavern came fitfully to my ears, though so uncertainly, that at first I thought it might have been only the rustle of the wind in the grass far overhead. It was cowardly to be scared at one's own fancies, and again mustering all my resolution, I shouted until the darkness rang, then listened eagerly with every faculty on stretch, and again from the dim came that tremulous gnashing of teeth, and that wavering, long-drawn breath, with something infinitely woeful and pathetic in it. Then my hair fairly stood on end, and in a minute my eyes were fixed with breathless wonder in front of me, for out of the remotest gloom, where the corruption of the floor was already beginning to glow with pale blue wavering phosphorescent light as the night fell, rose—glimmering itself with that ghastly lustre—something slim and tall and tremulous, that was full of life and yet was not quite of human form, and reared itself against the dark wall all agleam until its top, set with hollow eyes, was nine or ten feet from the ground, and oscillated and wavered, and seemed to feel about as I had done, for an opening, and then on a sudden collapsed in a writhing heap upon the ground, and I distinctly heard the fall of its heavy body as it disappeared into the blue inferno that burnt below!

Again that spectral thing rose laboriously, this time many paces nearer to me, to twice the height of a man, and wavered and tossed about, and then sank down like the fall of heavy draperies, as though the energy that had lifted it suddenly expired. Nearer and nearer it came, travelling round the circuit of the walls in that strange way, and awed and bewildered, I crept out into the open to let that dreadful thing go by. And presently to my relief, it did travel away, still wavering and writhing in silent, spectral discontent, and I breathed again.

As that luminous shadow faded into the remote, I shouted once more for the pleasure it must have been of hearing my own voice—again there was that gnashing of teeth—and the instant afterwards such a hideous chorus of yells from the other side of

the cavern, such a commingled howl of lost spirits, such an infernal moan of sorrow, and shame, and misery, rising and falling on the stillness of the night, that, for an instant, lost to everything but that dreadful sound, I leapt to my feet—with the stagnant blood cold as ice within me, my body pulseless for the moment—and mingled my mad shouting with the voices of those unseen devils, till the cave thundered with that hideous chorus! Then my manhood came back with a rush upon me, and judgment and sense, and I recognized in the trembling echoes a cry that I had often listened to in happier circumstances, and knew that uproar came from the throats of *wolves* entrapped like myself. But “were they alive?” I asked in fascinated wonder—how could they be in this horrible pit?—and if they were not—picture oneself cornered in such a trap, with a pack of wolfish spirits—it would not bear thinking of! Already my fancy saw constellations of fierce yellow eyes everywhere, and herds of wicked grey backs racing to and fro in the shadows, and with a tremulous hand I felt in my pocket for a match, and found I had two—and two only!

By this time the moon was up and a great disc of silver light, broad and bright, was creeping down the walls of our prison, but I would not wait for it. I struck the match with feverish eagerness, and held it overhead. It burned brightly for a moment, and I saw I was indeed in a natural crypt, with no outlet anywhere but by the narrow neck above, and all chance of reaching that was impossible, as the walls sloped inwards everywhere as they rose to it. All the floor on every hand was piled thigh deep with a ghastly tangle of animal remains in every state of return to their native earth, from the bare bones that would have crumbled at a touch, to the hide, still glossy and sleek—of the stag that had fallen in only a week or two before. Such a carnage place I never saw, such furs, such trophies, such heads and horns there were all around, as raised the envy of my hunter spirit even in that emergency.

But what held me spell-bound and rooted my eyes into the shadows was, twenty paces off, lying full stretch along the glossy, undulating path which the incessant feet of new victims had worn, month after month, over the hill and valley of dead bodies along under the walls, was a splendid eighteen-foot python—he whose ghostly rambles and ineffectual attempts to

scale the walls had first scared me in that place of horrors. I turned round, for the match was short, and scarcely noticing a score or two of dejected rats, who squeaked and scrambled amongst lesser snakes and strange reptiles, looked hard across the cave. There, on their haunches, in a huddle against the far wall, staring at me with dull gold eyes, were five of the biggest, ugliest wolves ever mortal saw. I had often met wolves above ground, but never any like those cavern ghouls. All the pluck and grace and savage vigour of their kind had gone from them ; their bodies, gorged with carrion, were vast, swollen and hideous : their shaggy fur was hanging in tatters from their red and mangy skins, the saliva streamed from their jaws in yellow ribbons, their bleary eyes were drowsy and dull, their great throats, as they opened them to howl in sad-chorus at the handful of purple night above, were dry and yellow, and there was about them such an air of disgusting misery and woe-begoneness, that, with a shudder and a cry I could not suppress, I let the last embers of the burning match fall to the ground.

How long I crouched in the darkness against the wall, with those hideous serenaders grinding their foam-flecked teeth and bemoaning our common fate in hideous unison, I do not know. Nor have I space to tell the wild, horrible visions which filled my mind for the next hour or two, but presently the wolves had been silent for a time and the moonlight had come down off the wall and was spread at my feet in a silver carpet, and as I sullenly watched the completion of that arena of light, I was aware that the brutes were moving. Very slowly they came forward out of the darkness, led by the biggest and ugliest, until they were all in the silver circle, gaunt, spectral, and vile, every mangy tuft of loose hair upon their sore-marked backs clear as daylight. Then those pot-bellied, phosphorescent undertakers began the strangest movements, and after watching them for a moment or two in fascinated wonder, I saw they had come to me in their despair to solicit my companionship and countenance, and I could not have believed it possible dumb brutes could have made their meaning so clear as those poor shaggy scoundrels did. They halted ten yards off, and with humble heads sagged down and averted eyes, slowly wagged their blood-matted tails. Then they came a few steps further and whined and fawned, and then another pace, and lay down

upon their stomachs, putting their noses between their paws like dogs who watch and doze, while they regarded me steadfastly with sad, great eyes, forlorn and terrible.

Foot by foot, grey and silver in the moonlight, they advanced with the offer of their dreadful friendship, until at last I was fairly bewitched, and when the big wolf came forward till he was reeking at my knees, a horrible epitome of corruption, and licked my hand with his great burning tongue, I submitted to the caress as readily as though he were my favourite hound, and henceforth the pack seemed to think the compact was sealed, and thrust their odious company upon me, trotting at my heels, howling when I shouted, and nuzzling down to me, putting their heavy paws upon my feet, and their great reeking jaws upon my chest whenever in despair and weariness I tried to snatch a moment's sleep.

But it would be impossible to go step by step through the infinitely painful hours of that night. Not only was the place full of spectral forms and strange cries, but presently legions of unclean things of a hundred kinds, that had lived on those dead beasts when they too were living, swarmed out in thousands and assailed us, adding a new terror to inferno, ravaging us who still kept body and soul together till our flesh seemed burning on our bones.

There was no rest for man or brute : the light was a mockery and the silence hideous ! Round and round we pattered for hours, I and the gaunt wolves, over the dim tracks worn by the feet of disappointment and suffering ; wading knee deep through a wavering sea of steamy blue flame, that rose from the remains and bespattered us from head to heel ; stumbling and tripping and groping, and cursing our fates, each in his separate tongue, while the night waned, the dew fell clammy and cold into our prison, and the great yellow stars looking down in turn upon us from the free purple sky overhead, made a dim twilight in our cell.

I was blundering and staggering round the walls for the hundredth time, feeling about with my hands in the hopeless search for some cleft or opening, when the grimmest thing of the whole evening happened. In a lonely corner of the den, in a little recess not searched before, pattering about in the dark, I suddenly touched with my hand—think with what an electric shock it

thrilled me—the cloth-clad shoulder of a man. With a gasp and a cry I leapt back, and stood trembling and staring into the shadows, scarcely daring to breathe. Much as I had suffered in that hideous place, nothing affected me half so much as—with all my nerves already stretched to their utmost—dropping my hand like that upon that dreadful shoulder. Heaven knows we were all cowards down there, but for a minute I was the biggest coward of any, and felt to the full those strange throes of superstitious terror that I had often wondered before to hear weaker men describe. Then I mustered my wavering spirit, and with the gaunt wolves squatting in a luminous circle around me, went into the recess again and put my hand once more upon my grim companion. The coat upon him was dry and rough with age, and beneath it—I could tell by the touch—there was nothing but bare, rattling bones! I stood still, grimly waiting for the flutter of my physical cowardice to subside, and then I bethought me of that second match, and in a minute of keen intensity, with such care as you may imagine, struck it against the wall. It lit, and at my feet, in ragged miner garb, sitting against the wall with his knees drawn up and his chin upon them, was the skeleton of a man so bleached and dry that it must have been like that for fifty years at least. At his side lay his miner's pick and pannikin, an old dusty pocket bible, the fragments of a grass hat, and a pair of heavy boots still neatly side by side, just as the luckless fellow had placed those well-worn things when he last put them by.

And overhead was something scratched upon a flat face of the rock. Hastily I snatched a scrap of paper from my pocket, and, lighting it at the expiring match, read on the stone :

“Monday,”  
“Tuesday,”  
“Wednesd—,”

—there was nothing but that and even the “Wednesday” was unfinished, dying away in a shaky uncertain scrawl, that spoke infinitely more plainly than many words would have done, of the growing feebleness of the hand that traced it—and then all was darkness again.

I crept back to my distant corner, and crouched like the dead



man against the wall, with my chin upon my knees, and kept repeating to myself the horrible simplicity of that diary—"Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday!" "Poor, nameless 'Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday!' And this was to be my fate?" I laughed bitterly, I would begin such another record with the first streak of dawn, and in the meantime I would sleep, whatever befell, and sleep I did, with those restless blue wolves cantering round the well-worn paths of the charnel-house to their own hideous music, the silent unknown away in the distance, and the opal eyes of the great serpent staring at me like baleful planets, cold, sullen and cruel, from between the dead man's feet.

It was a shout that woke me next morning, a clear ringing shout, that thrilled me down to my innermost fibre, and jerked me from dreadful dreams like a stone from a catapult. I scrambled to my feet and saw from the bright pavement of light about me that it was day above, and while I still staggered and wandered stupidly, again came that shout. I stared up overhead where the sunlight was making the neck of the trap a disc of intolerable brightness and there, when my eyes grew accustomed to that shine, was a round something that presently resolved itself into the blessed face of my steadfast chum, Will Hartland—"Trusty Will" they called him on the plains.

There is no need to say more. With the help of the strong cow-rope at his saddle-bow, and a round point of earth-embedded rock as purchase, he had me out of that accursed hole in an incredibly, ridiculously short space of time. And there I was leaning on his shoulder, free again, in the first flush of as glorious a morning as you could wish for, with the San Juan away in the distance, still winding in a sapphire streak through miles of emerald forests, a sweet blue sky above, and under foot the earth, wet with morning mist, smelling like a wine cooler, and every bent and twig gemmed with glittering prismatic dewdrops. I sat down on a stone, and after a long pull at Will's flask, told him something like the narrative I have just told you. And when the tale was done I paused a minute, and then said somewhat shyly: "And now I am going back, Will, old man! Back for those poor devils down yonder, who haven't a chance for their lives unless I do." Will, who had listened to

my narrative with horror and wonder flitting across his honest brown face, started up at this as though he thought the night's adventure had fairly turned my head. But he was a good fellow, tender of heart under his Mexican jacket, and speedily acknowledging that I was right, set to work to help me.

Down I went back into the pit, the very sight and shadow of which now made me sick, and with the noose end of Will's lasso, (he holding the other end above) set to work to secure those poor beasts who whined, and crowded round my legs, in hideous glee to have me back again amongst them. 'Twas easy work ! They were stupid and heavy, and seemed to have some idea of my intentions. And thus I noosed them one at a time, and whenever a wolf was fast, shouted to Will, who hauled away with scant ceremony, and up the grey ghoul went into that sunshine he had not seen for many weeks, spinning, and struggling, and yelping, truly a wonderful sight. But nothing would move the python ! I followed him round and round, trying all I knew to get his cruel cynical head through the noose, and then, when he had refused it a dozen times, I grew wroth, and cursing him in the name of the ancient Mother of my kind, gathered up all the tortoises, lizards, and lesser beasts I could find into my waist-band, and ascended into the sweet outer air once more.

An hour or two afterwards, a heavy blasting charge fetched from a neighbouring mine was dangling by a string just inside the mouth of the detestable trap, with its fuse burning brightly. A few minutes of suspense, a mighty crash, a cloud of white smoke hanging over the green hill-top, and one of the most treacherous places that ever marred the face of Nature's sweet earth was a harmless heap of dust and tumbled stones.



## The Undying Fire.

BY MRS. ST. LEO STRACHEY.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR :—I have been authorised to publish the following story, changing only the names of the persons to whom it happened, and of course the name of what is called in the story "the Manor House." With this word of preface I will proceed to tell the story in the first person, as it was told to me.

ONE summer morning, about five years ago, I, Cecil Desmond, was sitting at breakfast at the house of my brother-in-law, Gilbert Morris. I had returned home from India for a year's leave, and was making my headquarters at my brother-in-law's, as I had no home in England, and was anxious both to see my sister Kathleen, who had only been married a year, and to make her husband's acquaintance. This morning for a wonder Gilbert was late, and the pile of letters lay untouched by the side of his plate. However he soon came down and proceeded to demolish it. Suddenly he turned to his wife :

"Kathleen," he said, "Kathleen, what do you think has happened? Old William Morris is dead and has left me the Manor and everything."

"Gilbert!" cried Kathleen, "I thought you always said he hated you because you *would* tell him what a disgraceful state

all the cottages were in, and he was too much of a miser to put them right."

"Well, he *did* hate me, and apparently he hated me to the day of his death. Listen what this letter says. It is from Salmon and Grind, his lawyers; 'We were directed by our late client not to inform you of the disposition of his property until after the funeral. We regret that our late client directed us to inform you that he did not wish his corpse to be insulted by your presence at his funeral. The interment accordingly took place this morning——'"

"But," I interrupted, "he must have been as mad as a hatter! Are you sure that the property was not entailed on you?"

"No," answered Gilbert, "he was free to leave the place to whom he pleased, and there are plenty more Morrisises about, whom he might have chosen. But you are right as to his being rather mad, poor old fellow. He has always seemed a little queer since his only son died in a very sad way about twenty years ago."

"Why, you never told me that he had ever had a child," said Kathleen.

"Yes—very late in life, after he had been married a long time, a baby suddenly appeared. It lived till about five years old, and then late one stormy evening in the beginning of September it was suddenly discovered to be missing. The woods which lie all round the Manor House were searched, but the boy was not found till about two o'clock in the morning. He said that he had been led through the wood by a beautiful lady who said she was the mother of the Devil! Poor little man, *he* must have been a little crazy too. At any rate he never recovered his night in the woods, and he died of croup soon after."

"And old William Morris never had another child?" I asked.

"No, he lost his wife soon after, and then he became more and more queer and miserly. I only went to the Manor once, when I was about twenty. And then the old man had shut up most of the house and lived entirely in the housekeeper's room. And I never could get the housekeeper to unlock any of the other rooms. When I had been there a day or two he asked me what I thought of his management of the estate, and as in those days I was a cocky young ass, I spoke my mind in no measured terms. He ordered me out of the house, and I never heard of him from that day to this."

"When he crowns his oddities by leaving you all he possessed," I remarked; "well, it is a mystery."

"I see," said Gilbert, "he has taken the trouble to tie the estate up very carefully on my possible children, and on my next of kin should I survive my possible son. What a very odd way of expressing it! Cecil, will you run down with me to-morrow to see the place?"

"With pleasure," I replied; while Kathleen interrupted in rather a piteous voice:

"Don't you mean to take me?"

"No, dear," answered Gilbert, "I don't think for a moment the house would be fit for you. Even Cecil and I shall probably have to sleep at the inn. However, I will telegraph to the old housekeeper to get a couple of beds ready if she can. We shall be back on Thursday at the latest."

Accordingly the next day saw us speeding down to the Manor House. Plasavon, the nearest station (I need not say the Manor was on the borders of Wales) was a little wayside station, and the express only went as far as Shrewsbury, whence one crept on at a snail's pace amongst the crowds of people perennially attending fairs, who fill the carriages on the Welsh lines. It was the very hottest day I ever felt in England, and we stepped out hot and tired to the Plasavon platform to find that the only fly was attending a funeral, and that we should be obliged to walk to our destination—along some four or five miles of hilly road. As soon as we reached the woods by which the Manor was surrounded for about two miles, we were at least in the shade, but all the same we arrived at the house very hot and exhausted. But the calm, grey, old Elizabethan house, lying nestled amidst its woods, soon made us forget our miseries, and was well worth inheriting. The long front of the house faced west—the east side running up into the hill behind, under great elm trees, in a manner more picturesque than pleasant in the winter. It was evident that we were expected, for the great front door was open, and we could see an old woman standing by the porch shading her eyes from the almost parallel rays of the western sun.

She gave Gilbert a cordial welcome, and preceded us into the great hall. Shall I ever forget the heat of that hall? The sun was raking the long west windows and already making a temperature of about 80°. But not content with this a huge fire

of oak logs was blazing on the great feudal-looking hearth. I saw Gilbert glance at it, but he was too polite to tell the poor old lady what a very inappropriate form her welcome had taken.

The hall was a splendid great place with an open roof, and a minstrels' gallery at the end. The walls were hung with endless pictures of deceased Morrisises, but over the whole was an indescribable air of neglect and fustiness, which convinced me that Gilbert's account of old William Morris's miserly habits had not been exaggerated.

Presently the housekeeper showed us the rooms she had got ready for us. "Old Master, he said," she observed, showing Gilbert into a vast funereal-looking apartment, "he said as you was to sleep here and he had hisself brought into this room to die."

I mentally concluded that he had had a benevolent intention of haunting Gilbert. It was not at all a bad room, though it looked dark from being all panelled in black oak. One great window looked out south over the woods and hills, another, rather smaller, looked west on to the setting sun. Over the mantelpiece was a small but very striking and life-like portrait of a handsome but sensual-looking young man in the full-bottomed wig of the time of Charles II. Gilbert went up to it and looked at it, then turned to the housekeeper, and said, "This was the fellow who married the heiress and brought all the money into the family, was it not?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, "he brought in all the money and—and everything else. What time will you be pleased to dine, sir?"

"Oh, as soon as you can get dinner ready."

And the old lady—whose name we discovered to be Mrs. Bleak—hurried away to get us our food. My bed was made up in the dressing-room opening out of Gilbert's room, and after a toilet rendered shorter by the fact that all our luggage was still at Plasavon station, we went downstairs together. That abominable old woman had laid dinner in the hall, where the fire was burning more merrily than ever. She served us a very tidy little repast, which made me think better of old William than I had before, and in the course of it she remarked: "Old master, he told me as how he thought you'd like to use the hall a great deal, so I thought I'd put your dinner in it."

"Yes, thank you," said Gilbert, "it's a fine old room. But,

Mrs. Bleak, don't light the fire to-morrow morning ; it's so hot that we shall be better without it even in this great room."

Mrs. Bleak dropped the plate she was holding, and it broke with a clang on the stone floor. "Not light the fire, sir?" she exclaimed.

"No," answered Gilbert quietly, "the room will be quite sufficiently aired."

"But, sir, *that* fire never is lit, it don't never go out."

"You don't mean to say that it's kept up night and day?"

"Kep' up, sir, it don't want no keeping up. Good Lord! sir, don't you know?"

"Know? what do you mean?"

"That there fire is never kindled and it never goes out. Neither match nor log are put to it. It burns on and on just as you see it, and it has burnt on that hearth for two hundred year."

She made this astonishing statement so gravely that I could see that Gilbert was made quite uncomfortable, as superstitions about one's own family always do make one uncomfortable. He pushed away his plate and began to pace up and down the hall.

"Impossible," he said rather testily.

"It may not be possible, sir, but it be true."

"No, no, some one must put on logs in the night."

"Who would there be to do it, sir?"

"Well," said Gilbert, "at any rate we'll have a try at it, Cecil, no later than to-night. Bring up some pails of water, Mrs. Bleak, and we will try and get rid of it once and for all."

"You won't do that, sir," she replied sadly. "I wish you could," and she vanished in search of her pails.

"She must be mad," I ejaculated as soon as the door had closed upon her.

"I don't know," said Gilbert. "I remember in the old days there always was a mystery about this part of the house. As I told you, I never was allowed to see it, and I don't believe it has been used for twenty years."

"My dear fellow," said I, "depend upon it, it is some elaborate hocus-pocus arranged by your old cousin, William, who seems to have been determined you should have a pleasant time in the house."

As soon as the water arrived we set to work with sacrilegious hands on the fire, but the hearth-stone sloped a little towards

the room, and the water only ran out all over our boots without producing the slightest effect on the fire.

"Never mind," said Gilbert, "we'll try it to-morrow with sand."

As he raised his head a large picture over the mantelpiece caught his eye. It was of the same handsome good-for-nothing youth whose smaller portrait hung in Gilbert's room. In the larger picture one could see what a sensuous self-indulgent smile parted his full lips, and as Gilbert took up the lamp to look at it more closely—for it had grown dark by that time—his face assumed an expression indicating anything but respect for his ancestor.

"This fine fellow does not improve on closer acquaintance," he said. "What do you say his name was?"

"Geoffrey, sir," said Mrs. Bleak, "and this," turning to the next picture, "is his nephew, William, who succeeded him, his son having been lost at sea. William succeeded to the estates in 1694. He never married, and was succeeded in 1724 by his cousin, James Francis, called after the old Pretender. *His* son was killed at Culloden in 1745."

How long the old lady would have gone on with her list I don't know, but Gilbert interrupted her by asking, in rather a forced voice, "Has the estate never passed from father to son then?"

"No, sir," she answered; "not for two hundred years."

"Don't tell that to Kathleen," he said to me sharply.

At that moment the fire began to crackle and spit, for all the world like a malicious old man who has just heard an excellent joke at the expense of his neighbour. I could see that Gilbert was getting nervous and excited, and on the plea of the great heat I proposed an adjournment to our rooms, where, at any rate, if there were ghosts, it was to be hoped that they were cool ones.

The next morning we set to work on the fire, and, to make a long story short, we tried every means in our power to put it out. We were quite unsuccessful. It would seem to go out for half-an-hour, and then up it would start again, crackling merrily as if nothing had happened. I believed that Mrs. Bleak used to come and light it when we were not looking, but Gilbert declared that he had watched by it, and gradually seen the sand or earth we had put on it slip away, and reveal that the fire had merely been covered, not extinguished.

As we travelled back to London, Gilbert consulted me as to



the advisability of bringing Kathleen down to the Manor. He confided to me that she was expecting her confinement in about three months ; it was then the beginning of August, and as she was rather superstitious, he did not want her to be frightened by Mrs. Bleak's stories, and by the mysterious fire. At the same time, he said, she was wild to go. We finally settled that she should be told that there was an ancient superstition that the hall fire was never to be let out, or the race of Morris would die with it. This invention was mine, I am sorry to say. I was to go down first and tell Mrs. Bleak of the pious fraud we were about to perpetrate, and also to warn her that she was not to tell Kathleen any dreadful stories about the place never going from father to son, as, if her baby should turn out to be a boy, it would make her so dreadfully nervous about it. All came about as we planned ; Mrs. Bleak promised to reveal nothing ; and the end of August found us established at the Manor. The weather had changed, it was now very cold and stormy, and September set in with wild winds and beating rain. Kathleen unfortunately took a great fancy to the hall. "You see, Gilbert," she used to say naively, "as we *have* to keep that fire up for the welfare of the family, it would be simple extravagance to light another."

So in the evening we used to be obliged to gather round the mysterious fire, and I confess it made Gilbert and me very uncomfortable to see Kitty sitting in front of it. Of course, old William Morris's death was too recent for visitors to come, but soon after we arrived, Gilbert asked Mr. Holdsworth, the vicar, to dine and sleep, for the village and vicarage were five miles away. He was a hale old man of about seventy, and had been in the parish for over thirty years. After dinner Kathleen proposed as usual to adjourn to the hall (as Kathleen liked the smell of smoke, we had taken to foreign ways and all left the table together), and I saw Mr. Holdsworth give a little start.

"The hall ?" he ejaculated. "Do you use the hall as a sitting-room ?"

I got behind Kathleen and made a tremendous face at him, putting my finger to my lips, and he said no more. But nothing would induce him to come near the fire, he said he was not cold. About ten Kathleen left us, and then I said :

"I must apologise for making that dreadful face at you, but the fact is my sister does not——"

Gilbert interrupted me. "My wife is not very strong just now, and I thought it best not to tell her the legend about the fire. I see you know it, and so I suppose does the whole country-side."

"No," said Mr. Holdsworth, "your cousin had shut up the place entirely for the last twenty years, and the story has died out; besides, except by a very few people, the real legend was never known. The perpetual fire was supposed to be a freak of the masters of the Manor. I only know, because in years gone by, your cousin told me the legend. Will you pardon me for saying that I think you should tell Mrs. Morris? There have been rumours that at this time of year an apparition is seen in the woods. I think she should not stray about the grounds alone, at any rate, not till she is stronger."

Gilbert sighed uneasily. "I think," he said, "I had better take her away——"

"My dear Mr. Morris, that is the very course I should suggest."

"You talked just now," I interposed, "of a legend. I wish you would tell it us. I don't believe in ghosts myself, but I don't know how to explain away that fire, and I confess I should like to know how it came there."

"I will tell the story," said Mr. Holdsworth, "though it is always painful to me to think that the spirits of evil are allowed to exercise as much power as this legend attributes to them. But I think I shall convince Mr. Morris that he ought not to allow his wife in her present condition to stay here."

"The legend concerns my ancestor, Geoffrey Morris, whose portrait hangs over the mantel-piece, I believe," said Gilbert.

"Yes," answered Mr. Holdsworth. "In his day the fortunes of the family were at a very low ebb. Fines to the Parliament had stripped them of half their possessions, and though Charles II. was on the throne, the Manor lies too far from London for his accession to make much difference. Your ancestor Geoffrey was left an orphan at a very early age, and unfortunately a cousin of his, a ward of his father's, was left to his care with the estates. Geoffrey passed most of his time at court, only coming occasionally for a short time to the Manor, and Isabel, that was the girl's name, grew up quite uncontrolled and wild. On one of his short visits he discovered that his cousin had suddenly grown into a beautiful young woman, and he set himself to display all his courtier's

arts to win her favour. He succeeded only too well. He promised solemnly to marry her as soon as he could mend his fortunes, and then left her for the court. She heard nothing of him for a long time, when one stormy evening in September, as she sat over the fire weeping bitterly as she thought her cousin would come back too late to legitimise his child, Geoffrey rode up to the door. He was very gentle and affectionate, and sitting on the settle beside her he bade her rejoice, for the King had made his fortune at last. He had offered him the hand of the richest heiress at the court. True, she was ugly, but Isabel was his love, and there were other houses in out-of-the-way corners besides the Manor, and though the son of his wife must succeed to the estates—at this the unfortunate woman who had listened speechless to his infamous words, tore herself out of his arms, and broke into a torrent of abuse. Geoffrey treated the matter lightly. Such things were done every day—the King himself——”

“‘Silence,’ cried Isabel, ‘I will listen no longer. Now hear me. No son of your wife’s shall inherit your estates, and for your sins your race shall live under my curse, no son succeeding to his father from this day forth for ever.’

“‘Pooh,’ replied Geoffrey, ‘you will think differently tomorrow. Your anger will be over long before that fire dies upon the hearth.’

“‘Then let that fire burn for ever,’ she answered. ‘I curse you, and I curse your race; misfortune shall dog their footsteps, and happy those whose sons spring dead out of their mother’s side.’

“‘You forget,’ he said brutally, ‘you are cursing your unborn child—*my* child.’

“‘Your child,’ she cried, ‘your child will be the Devil.’ And she rushed out of the great door into the night and the rain.

“A few days after that a mad woman was found in the woods holding a poor dead baby in her arms and crying, ‘See, see, I am the mother of the Devil.’ She is still seen haunting the place of her sorrows, the fire has burnt on the hearth ever since, and no son has succeeded to his father.”

I confess that I felt very sick as this horrible story of ancient crime ended, and Gilbert turned pale and muttered, “I know *now* why William Morris left me the estate.”

Of course we resolved to carry off Kathleen as soon as possible, though the next morning, by broad daylight, there seemed no reason why she should be frightened by a sudden move, so Gilbert told her that he did not think it safe for her to remain in that out-of-the-way place any longer, and we resolved to return to London at the end of the week.

A day or two after that I went out for a long exploring walk. Gilbert, who hardly left Kathleen for a moment, could not be induced to come. When I came back I found the whole household in consternation. Gilbert had been detained by the lawyer on business in the library for an hour, and when he got away Kathleen was nowhere to be found. One of the servants had seen her in the garden going towards the woods. She had not returned, and it was now quite dusk. Gilbert and I instantly started into the woods in pursuit, going in opposite directions, but we knew the way so little that we were constantly meeting. At last we resolved to go over the ground together. Suddenly we found that we had got so much "turned round" in our direction that we were in a thicket close to the house, and there we found Kathleen in a dead faint on the ground. We carried her in, and I sent off at once for a doctor, while Gilbert tried every means in his power to bring her to her senses. At last, with a gasp and a sob, she came to herself.

"Oh, Gilbert," she cried, "save me from her. She said she was the mother of the Devil, and that the child that I bore came of a wicked race and she prayed that it would die at its birth. Oh, Gilbert! Gilbert!" and she fell to sobbing and crying as if her heart would break. That night in the old Manor House a bitter battle was waged hour after hour between life and death. Of the two human beings now struggling for existence could even one be saved? or would the life of one be purchased by the other? At dawn Gilbert came to me and told me that all was over, and that Kathleen they hoped was safe, "But the baby—a boy—is dead."

"Dead! poor little fellow." Unconsciously my feet carried me downstairs as I mused on the fate of my little nephew, whose span of life had lasted only an hour. In the hall the undying fire was crackling and blazing, and sending up great shoots of flame into the chimney.

## The Secret of the Dead.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,  
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,  
And said, as plain as whisper in the air,  
The place is Haunted !

—T. HOOD.

“WHEN I get to the next stile I shall rest,” I assured myself, for I had been on the tramp all day through the hills and dales of Derbyshire, and now, tired, hot, and dusty, felt disinclined for much more walking.

My pitching on this Midland county for my holiday tour had been rather a sudden fancy, but, on spreading out my much-used map, I found amidst all the red-marked patches of acquaintance-ship one Midland county shone out in simple white, and though there were many other spaces yet to fill up, this Derbyshire land persistently asserted itself in such an aggressive fashion that, turn away from it as much as I could, it would not be ignored.

At last, with rather a strong expression, I threw all my guide books in a heap, packed a knapsack with necessities and a valise with extras, and took the night mail for Derby.

This was ten days ago, and now my furlough was nearly over. In one week's time I should be on my way to India and work, and it would probably be many years before I could visit old England again.

Of farewells I had none to say, the few relations I possessed were scattered to the four quarters of the world, and my friends were far too numerous for me to go the round of them, neither would they expect it from previous experience of their old comrade the Rover.

The flies were very teasing, utterly useless to shake one's head nearly off, wave at them with hat and hands—hum—buzz—sting, they were on one again, nipping and pinching at their very good pleasure.

At last that long-hoped-for stile appeared beside me, and with a satisfied yawn I threw myself on to it.

Then just below me, nestled against the hill-side, I saw a little

greystone church. Inside, should the door be open, it would at least be shady, and I felt nearly broiled.

So down I went.

A quaint old Norman arch with stone seats was the nearest entrance, and such a delicious coolness filled the tiny building that with a great feeling of contentment I thankfully sank down on one of the open seats, and stretched out my tired limbs.

Surely in former holidays I had done much more with less fatigue, maybe the long hot years spent in India had weakened my muscles and tried my sinews.

You will remember of old, a more matter-of-fact fellow than myself didn't breathe. Jokes were always an abhorrence to me. I never could see the points of them, and as for light literature so called, one novel was all I ever managed in that line, and I fell asleep over *that* more times than I care to say—all this by the way.

Presently I glanced round the simple building, and soon found, from the various monuments around, it was far older than I had fancied at first.

One old tomb struck me much, it was so very carefully carved, and though Time's touches had long since softened the sharp edges and crumbled the figures and letters more than a little, it yet had a power and life of its own that would never be lost.

Only the old favourite style of its generation. The father and one son kneeling on one side of an oaken coffer, the mother and four daughters facing them on the other side.

The wife must have been a handsome woman if she resembled her stony likeness, and it was no doll prettiness, but a woman of will and power, whose effigy with tightly clasped hands knelt there. Her husband it was plain had been of rougher, ruder mould, a bluff old English gentleman. I got up from my seat and went nearer to look closer at the group and inscription. All the names and dates were filled in, with the exception that no date came after the son's name—the blank space remained.

I went back to my former position and sat down for yet a few more minutes' rest, and then a strange thing happened—the kneeling lady rose swiftly from beside the coffer, and fell almost prostrate at my feet with her thin hands raised in piteous prayer, and heavy tears trickling down the saddest face I ever saw. I

rubbed my eyes to clear my vision, and with a start jumped up from what I suppose *you* will call a doze. *I* think otherwise, but that matters not.

The lady in stone looked quite a fixture on the tomb again, as my last glance fell on her, and finding by the lengthening shadows my rest must have been longer than I had thought, I put on a spurt, and tramped onwards to my next sleeping place, an old-fashioned inn.

Over my bread and cheese I asked the landlady about the quaint carved tomb I had so lately seen.

She told me that long ago the family had been of some importance, and that the old Squire had himself carved the tomb, and filled in all the names, leaving only the dates of death to be added.

The family heritage was an awful temper — “passionate” would not describe it—it was a fierce unbridled rage, dreadful to witness. When first the Squire’s wife came to the Manor her grief and fright had been so apparent, that for love of her, her husband *did* try to curb his fearful temper, but of what use then? As well try to check the mountain torrent on its rapid downward rush, as in full-grown manhood alter the whole habit of a life-time.

Soon the restraint was forgotten, and though custom and use never became second nature to the poor lady, doubtless she soon knew that whilst the fierce rage lasted, she was powerless to interfere.

Two of the daughters died as children, the others fought and quarrelled from childhood into youth, and then another black drop filled poor Madam’s cup—husband and son disputed so fiercely together that often they came to blows, and once or twice indeed, it was said, that but for the poor mother throwing herself between them in their mad fury, bloodshed would have resulted.

Then one night there was an awful uproar, and when it at last died away, father and son rode off from the old manor, and the mother was left weeping on her knees.

Days passed, and when with a heavy frown, and in a savage humour, Squire Malcolm returned alone, the servants began to whisper they had but gone away to finish their quarrel elsewhere—doubtless Master Hugh had been silenced, perhaps for ever,

and none would know where his poor bones had been hidden secretly away.

My landlady paused to notice if I appeared to take a proper interest in her bygone tale, and finding I waited for more she went on.

Shortly after Hugh Malcolm departed, the tomb in the church was put up, the Squire carefully choosing a suitable place, not too high up, he said, for folks to admire his work ; and though one or two suggested it was a creepy notion to have it put up when he was alive, he utterly pooh-pooh'd the idea, and said all family stones and tablets had spaces left on them for the survivors, and the names being properly filled in would hasten no one's death.

The two surviving daughters married and left the old place. Time passed on, the parents were getting well on in years, when one day the old squire broke his neck in the hunting field, and the shock of seeing him brought home lifeless was too much for Dame Anne, she fell senseless to the ground, and the doctors said, though she might probably live some years, she would never speak or walk again.

Over and over she tried to ask for something, and pointed always in the direction of the church. One day, when she seemed rather better, they carried her down into the building and harder than ever the poor soul tried with her helpless fingers to shew them what she wanted.

The disappointment of failure brought on a second and worse attack, and before a week ended, she passed away from this earth. The daughters could throw no light on the son's whereabouts—they almost inclined to the popular idea that he had come by his end unfairly.

For the time being the property was divided amongst them, though neither cared to reside in the old home, which was accordingly shut up as it still remained, Mrs. Lennox said, up to the present time, and was now known far and wide as the Haunted House.

At the present time a descendant of one of the daughters was the sole owner, and said to be in a bad state of health.

The old house was going to rack and ruin and there were many that declared they had seen a white figure glide swiftly down to the church and pass into the old building ; some said



even, that on entering in the quiet evening a kneeling form with upraised hands caught their gaze just where Madam's chair had rested on her last sad visit.

No news of the absent son's life or death had been received.

The longest lane has a turn, and so the queerest tale sometimes ends, and stifling a yawn, I thanked Mrs. Lennox for her entertainment and went out for a smoke.

It was a frying night, quite impossible to sleep, and if I dozed off for a minute, kneeling figures in long processions passed and repassed in countless numbers.

Wishing to goodness I had never rested in that queer old church, and caring very little I fear for what remained untold of that unfinished tale, in despair at last I dressed and went out for an early stroll, and on my return decided I could fill my foreign letter well to you, Alexander, with all this rubbish, then it will be off my mind, and I'll post it at Derby before Thursday. Heigh-ho! how the time goes, my holiday is all but over.

\* \* \* \* \*

In other lands for many years I toiled away, and now again I am on the eve of departure once and for ever from India's burning suns.

I have come in for a legacy too—supplementing my retiring pension; not much in the way of money, the lawyer says, but an old house and a good bit of land, splendidly situated in a most healthy part. I think the letter said Staffordshire, but I can't find it anywhere, and haven't time to hunt round.

On my return I shall go and have a good prow! by myself, without any blue-bags dancing attendance.

\* \* \* \* \*

What a bore it should have come on wet, to be sure, just when I wish to admire my new property; old Wigs did look surprised when I marched in on him this morning and asked for particulars of my rural cottage.

"A *mansion*, my dear sir, and on a large scale, and the land all round very rich."

"Then I suppose it brings in a good bit, as I conclude it is let, or did my very distant cousin live there herself?"

"No one lived there for ages, and then a farmer consented to on condition of paying really a peppercorn rent, and having all the land at eight shillings an acre, instead of the proper rate,

£2. He uses some of the rooms, but the whole place is in the last stage of decay. However, my dear sir, you'll soon see for yourself."

"Supposing I wish to live there, will there be any bother?"

A queer smile showed for a minute on the learned gentleman's face, as he gravely assured me should I wish to take up my residence at Wynadotte Hall, no one would hinder me.

I certainly forgot to ask him *why* my valuable property had got into such evil repute, but that I can soon find out, and here we are, I do believe.

\* \* \* \* \*

Five hours later!

Well, this is a rum start; let me just get it down straight, for I seem plumped into a dream of the past.

When I left the station that old Chips told me was the nearest to Wynadotte Hall, I found of course nothing in the shape of a conveyance going my way, but as the rain was only then a drizzle I started off quite cheerfully. The first check I got was on asking my road to the Hall.

The fellow looked at me, took off his hat, scratched his head to awaken his brain, and at last directed me to the Haunted House. No one knew it by any other name, said he with a fine air of scorn.

At last the outbuildings came into view, extensive, solid, and in good repair, and then the house itself, standing back from the road, with a large courtyard in front, and handsome wrought-iron gates. The courtyard was nothing but an expanse of common rank grass, the gates were broken and rusted, with railings missing all along.

Then the house itself gave me an unpleasant shock, with windows blocked up everywhere, and woodwork on doors and frames equally innocent of paint.

I entered by an unlatched door in the lower part of the house, at the side, and saw at once that lawyer fellow was right, when he said it was indeed a mansion.

A wide elm staircase with slender spiral supports went right up to the top of the house, with large landings and archways on each floor. An iron pillar propped the much worn steps, dark with age. The banqueting hall opened straight to the great

door leading I presume down to some steps into the overgrown courtyard.

Many of the rooms were in twilight from the darkened windows, and only one here and there out of the whole fifty-two let in heaven's light and air.

Old faded tapestry in tatters and strips hung still in some of the rooms, but holes in the floors, great gaps in the walls, weather stains in all directions, told a mournful tale of their own. One beautifully worked four-post bedstead took up a good part of one of the rooms, and over all hung that strange sad air of desolation. The upper floors had gone and the whole looked almost unsafe.

I saw the dark shadow of a tall man thrown strongly on the wall of an inner room, but when I reached the spot 'twas but the reflection of a battered can piled on top of some old chairs.

The air was heavy with stale odours, and, depressed not a little by this private view, I left the house and neglected grounds, and tumbling almost over a fine old man made enquiries about my nearest way to the "Hare and Hounds."

He told me of a short cut down the valley easy to find.

I rummaged in my pockets for matches, but could only find a rumpled sheet or two of foreign paper, which on smoothing out I found was a faded letter written to a cousin and never posted. It was dated from the "Hare and Hounds," Derbyshire. Strange that I was now on my way to its namesake.

And there above me stood a little old church; as I live, the very identical building of long ago. Why, dimly I still remembered some queer old dream connected with that church. Curiosity alone would have obliged me to look round it again, and I found it little altered. It is true there were candles and flowers on the altar, and the place looked more cared for than of old.

The old carved Malcolm tomb stood unchanged, and as I paused in front and read again the sunken lettering, "Of Wynadotte Hall," caught and held my attention. Why, *that* was my new possession. What was the story that old house could tell?

With a queer feeling of kinship I went closer to the inscription and read it carefully to the end. The top of the coffer was highly finished off, and the lid itself looked so realistic that in-

voluntarily I put up my hand to lift it, and to my surprise it opened at once, and a cloud of dust flew right in my face. My first impulse, with smarting eyes, was to drop the lid immediately, then I saw the inside was really hollow, so plunged my arm down to the bottom, and fished up in triumph a small bundle of old yellow papers tied with a blue silk ribbon.

To put them in my pockets, and close the lid was but the work of a minute, but even in that glance I saw they were likely to prove of interest to me.

I found the same "Hare and Hounds" I remembered, but Mrs. Lennox was getting old and did not recollect me.

My solitary meal did not take long, and I was soon at the papers.

Well, truly the sins of the father are indeed visited on the children to the third and fourth generation.

The papers were mostly written in a fine pointed Italian hand and here is the story I read :

"I, Anne Cranley, married John Malcolm against the wishes of my parents, and, indeed, only a few days before the wedding, my poor mother called me into her own room, and pleaded earnestly yet again that even now I would give John up. She told me that the awful temper that all the family shared had again and again broken bonds, and crimes numberless had been the result. Certainly one in each generation died a violent death, little accounted of in those lawless times, when most families had their favourite skeletons, only occasionally aired by the light of day.

"Still I refused to yield, and then my mother told me that if I married John I should need indeed a brave heart and true, for the curse *must* lie on him and his children, though maybe by no fault of his own.

"His father had had his full share of that evil spirit of old—two sons and a daughter had lived at home, and the mother was virtually a nonentity. Quarrels with four hot-tempered people were matters of everyday occurrence, but one wild, stormy winter's night a fierce row began.

"The men, at least, had taken more than enough even for those hard-drinking times, and soon a regular stand-up fight began, when blows rained thick and fast and bitter oaths filled all the air.

“What part in the quarrel Miss Laura took did not transpire, but certainly she was present. When the fierce gestures and threatening words led to cuffs and knocks, and the father’s hand struck a violent blow at the younger son’s head, sending him staggering down, striking his temple against a corner of the old carved table, her cruel words were silenced. Sobered instantly by the sight of the motionless form on the floor—finding their efforts unavailing to revive him—Laura Malcolm rushed wildly out in the darkness of the night, saddled herself her own white horse and rode off at a reckless rate in search of the aid that yet could not avail. She was a good rider across country, but in the darkness the path was hard to find—the horse got fidgetty and frightened, and stumbling into an unseen rabbit-hole just as they entered a small wood, fell heavily to the ground, breaking his neck against a bank, and though Laura had been thrown off in his stumble, one of his hoofs in his dying agony came with a horrid dull crash on her head, and with little more than half-an-hour between them, two of the wild, reckless band were summoned to the Unknown Land.

“At the Hall itself the night was one never to be forgotten ; the father was simply not responsible for his actions, and it fell on John Malcolm to make all arrangements, but when, in the early morning, the sister’s body was carried home, it was sad to see the brother’s grief, and one would have thought the lesson strong enough to last a lifetime ; but after a while, however, when the shock had worn off, quarrelling began again.

“Here my mother made a long pause, and glanced appealingly at me. Heredity was an awful thing, and rather would she see me in my coffin than married to John Malcolm.

“As well whistle to the winds !

“That day week, as Anne Malcolm, on a pillion behind my husband, I left my dear old home, and I lived to learn that every word my mother spoke came true.

“I thought in my pride of ignorance *I* could manage so well there should be no quarrels. Mother was old and timorous, John would do anything for me !

“I had the house pretty much to myself in those days, and somehow the gloom that hung over the fine old rooms, the footsteps on the stairs that yet never entered, and that John declared was only the elm creaking as all old wood might, the stories the



servants told me of the place being haunted, and that the sound of angry voices issuing from the banqueting hall, and a white horse and its rider, galloping wildly along, were of frequent occurrence, etc., etc. It took some years to break my spirit down, but the mills of God grind surely if they grind exceedingly slow.

"How my heart sank down when Baby Hugh went into a storm of temper. It was so dreadful to witness. I expected the child to go into convulsions any moment, and the way he threw things about with his tiny fists, and kicked and plunged like mad—frightened me. What would the future hold for him? God knows I tried my best, and poor John prayed me to persevere, but *he* never took in when he was having what he called a 'flare up,' that the work of months and years was undone in five minutes of such rage.

"'Father does so and so,' the children were sharp enough to notice, 'so of course *we* can.'

"When my little twin daughters died of the fever, I felt sadly thankful that though this was no doubt part of the Visitation of God that certainly sooner or later would fall on us, they at least were innocent. Soon after, I lost my parents, and only then I realised how sensibly my mother had always helped me in every way and cheered me when nothing else could. She never told me I had myself to thank, but pointed me steadily on my rugged path to where the light shone clear at the end.

"My husband spent hours sculpturing, and the whim seized him to chisel a family tomb. Anything that kept him occupied and shortened the time spent over the endless meals was a boon to me, and with my wheel humming busily along, many a quiet hour was passed.

"Hugh also was very anxious to copy his father and carve, and one sad day, after a long pillion ride to a distant cousin, we came in to find a great ugly hole made in the top of the old coffer that my husband had nearly finished.

"There was a terrible storm of course, and the boy was severely punished, but afterwards I found his idea was to make a money-box of it 'for Hugh,' he said.

"The notion tickled my husband's fancy, and he said he would follow it out, so he made a fresh top with a slit in it that could be easily lifted up.

"As the tomb was nearly finished, and this addition would

take a little longer, I encouraged the idea, and my husband took pains to carry it out well.

"Indeed, Hugh's pocket money gradually came to be always kept under the coffer lid, and many other little valuables belonging to him. Naturally, *the* charm of the thing was the slight mystery about it, Hugh begging the secret of his money-box might be kept.

"Ah! those were peaceful days—the lull before the storm.

"Time passed on, and the shadows came closer! Father and son quarrelled bitterly, generally about money, and one day, or night rather, that old evil spirit entered into them both, and they came to fierce blows.

"I thought my heart would break, for surely *this* was the Visitation again.

"I parted them somehow, and sullen and ashamed both looked, and I saw they would soon begin afresh, when something snapped suddenly in my brain, and I fell senseless to the ground. Thank God for his mercy in coming to my aid! for, seeing me fall, brought back to John's memory that long-ago night of tragedy, when his brother fell—never to rise again!

"My hair was damp with water, and wine was at my lips, when at last, with a shuddering sigh, I came back to earth's troubles, and my husband, with shaking lips and trembling hands (he had thought me dead), promised solemnly the next time he and Hugh quarrelled should be the last, for he would send the boy away, but surely after such another awful fright, there would not be another time!

"I would not discourage him, but from that day I began to save, and coin after coin found their way into Hugh's coffer.

"My daughters took more after me than their father, I am thankful to say, and helped me much, especially as about this time I became very subject to long fainting fits.

"With a dread on me that nothing ever lifted, I wrote to a cousin of mine settled in a quaint old Dutch town, and asked him if we found it advisable to send Hugh abroad, if he would give an eye to the lad, and help him on a bit, and a great load seemed lifted from me, when at last an answer came saying the boy should at any time be welcome, and come when he might, he should have a second home with him, for the sake of his cousin Nan!

"Carefully I placed this letter with my cousin's name and address in Hugh's favourite hiding place.

"Then one night a dispute began about a village youth who, John declared, spent his nights poaching, and should be made an example of. Hugh defended him vehemently, and protested his innocence—louder and louder rose the angry voices with bitter sarcasms, cruel taunts, fierce oaths and threatening gestures, and then they came to blows.

"Hugh was slight and wiry, John ponderous and powerful, and at first it seemed hopeless to stop them, then I seized a great caraffe of water from the sideboard, and threw the whole contents of the ice-cold water into their faces.

"The shock and surprise made a minute's pause, and gave me my chance. Seizing an arm of each with all my force I prayed them for the love of Heaven to remember their solemn oath, and part before bloodshed came of it!

"The water was falling in pools on the floor and trickling in streams down their necks. I ordered Hugh from the room—to pack his clothes at once—never mind the wild night—and then I had a sad scene with poor John.

"Of that I shall not write here. For weal or woe I won my way at last. And when the tide of despairing remorse had fully set in, I began to hurry Hugh's preparations. In vain John begged me to let them try again — next time I might fail to check them, and then that awful doom would fall. *No*, twice *no*. I had rather never see my boy's face again, than think that the curse of Cain was on one of the two I loved so well.

"The money in the little coffer made quite a good sum, and John gave also all he could, and then when the dawn of another day began, in the chill of a winter's morn, father and son—now in peace and love, thank God! rode forth together, and I knew I had seen the last of my boy.

"Kneeling, I watched them go, and kneeling I prayed for courage never to recall Hugh in his father's life-time, come what might.

"It is by my husband's wish I have written out this long account, the third that I have made, but the others coming in John's way when angry and unreasonable, he tore them into atoms. So this copy I shall place away in Hugh's hiding place,



it will be safe there, and when he returns he will surely know where to look.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I came home from paying a sick friend a few days' visit, to find John had had the tomb taken down to the church and put up, and though somehow I had never thought of my papers going there, where could they be safer than in God's own keeping? so now I have only to walk quietly down, and put this last sheet with the rest.

"Neither my husband or daughters are aware where Hugh has gone, indeed the latter have never mentioned his name to me, since that sorrowful morning when I told them, for reasons known only to their father and myself, he had gone abroad for years.

"In all human likelihood, John will long out-live me, for I am ageing fast, and should anything happen to *me*, what more natural than that Hugh should be sent for? and then the pain and the sorrow of the wearied years of absence from my only son, would all go for nothing, for well I know, alas! by now, that John will carry his fierce temper to the grave, poor soul, and in the quarrels that would surely come, the curse might afresh begin.

"And neither can I leave even a sealed letter behind, for fear of some evil chance. The papers rest in God's own house, and so shall the secret of the boy's whereabouts. Some day—somehow—when the time has come and God's solemn curse is removed, and the dark shadow of the Visitation lifted, perhaps there will be happy times in this old haunted house. 'Haunted,' ay! truly and indeed, but by man's own wrong-doing.

"ANNE MALCOLM."

\* \* \* \* \*

So my castle is indeed in ruins about my ears, in more senses than one, for if that wanderer married abroad, *his* children are the rightful heirs, and rather than claim unfairly that sorrowful heritage, I would let it lapse to the Crown. Now I must make enquiries abroad, and never did anyone part with a legacy with less regret than I shall, if only I can find a Malcolm living.

That poor brave woman has set me a lesson to learn, and an example to follow. I should indeed be proud to count kinship with her.

\* \* \* \* \*

The clue has not been easy to find, the threads of the tangled skein had got so mixed and knotted. The first big tangle of course had been that all believed so stubbornly in Hugh's death at his father's hands.

Step by step, thread by thread, I at length wound the frayed and broken hank out straight, and all is plain sailing now.

Hugh had married a gentle Dutch girl, whose very limited knowledge of English perhaps, helped to keep the peace when the Malcolm rage broke forth. Then his days of idleness were over, and in hard labour, if it *was* voluntary, several years were passed.

Three little children and their mother depended on him for their daily bread, when one day in passing along a narrow street, where the high projecting houses overhead almost seemed to touch, a quaint, heavy old sign fell suddenly on him, hitting him just on *the* fatal place on his temple, killing him on the instant.

His wife knew little of his English home, though of his parents and his sisters he had often talked.

The kind old cousin would have known with whom to communicate, and what to advise, but he had left his business in Hugh's hands and gone, it was thought, to England.

The children grew up somehow, but they proved a heavy handful. The little girl was deformed from an accidental fall down some stone stairs when left in her brothers' charge, and from that day she had possessed such an influence over the lads that her word was indeed law to them.

One boy went to sea, and in the rough life of those times on board ship did fairly well, but he never came home again, as he was washed overboard in a heavy storm. The other son did his utmost to support his mother and sister in comfort, but every now and then times were very bad, and then short commons prevailed.

It fortunately never entered his head to think of marrying until rather late in life, but when his mother and sister were both dead, he missed a woman in his house so much that after years of friendship he suddenly married good Burgher Kant's youngest daughter, and *her* temper being very fiery, instead of having everything his own way, he found for peace and quiet's sake it was expedient that Vrow Gretchen should have hers.

Their only child, a boy, was three years old, when in a cholera

outbreak both parents died, the home was pillaged of every thing of any value, and the little fellow sent to the poor house.

And here I found the child.

I liked his looks, and the officials spoke well of him as an honest, likely lad, so I have made up my mind to look after him, do guardian in short, give him a decent education and a chance in life, and then if he turns out well, when he comes of age he shall have that old land handed over to him. The house will most likely have tumbled down completely long before then, for this poor, destitute, friendless child is only eight.

In the meantime the property is *mine* to all intents and purposes, and as I have puzzled out the thing unaided, and consulted no one, there is little fear of the lad's hearing about his forebears' sins, about the worst thing for his future welfare that could happen to him, in my opinion. Should he prove free from that awful taint, then there is before him a useful, and I hope, a happy life, as an English gentleman.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### L'ENVOI.

The boy is now sixteen, and I have not seen him lose his temper yet, so I am very hopeful for the future, and I have but to add that my Derbyshire agent in reporting on farming matters and local gossip, said in passing, that for eight years now no one had seen anything of a ghostly nature at Wynadotte Farm, as it now seems generally called, and though still known as the Haunted House, I can live in comfort, believing that good Dame Anne will rest in peace. The dark stain has been wiped out from the Malcolm family, never, pray God, to fall on them again.

E. YOLLAND.

# The Strange Case of Thomas Blakewitch.

## PART I.

RELATED BY ANTONY MARC, JOURNALIST.

IT was plainly evident that I needed a holiday, and I determined to have it ; the only question was, where should I go ?

I was feeling awfully out of sorts ; couldn't eat, couldn't sleep, and worst of all, couldn't work. To be sure, I managed to keep my pen going, and daily turned out a certain amount of "copy" for the journal on whose staff I had the honour to be engaged ; but the work was done in a perfunctory manner, with a distinctly unsatisfactory result. A novel, which, when completed, I believed would make a decided "hit," was lying upon my desk ; I had written as far as "Chapter 18. How the murderer was tracked——," and, for the life of me, couldn't add another sentence. Several short stories sent to magazines were "declined with thanks," and at last I received a delicate intimation from the editor of the *Daily Fillip* that my recent contributions had not been up to the mark of those which had procured me the *staff appointment* mentioned above, with an expression of hope that I should be able to give more satisfaction in future. This determined me. I would give myself a month's rest. I left that question of the murderer for mature deliberation, and turned my mind to the more interesting one of—where should I go ?

Bath ? Brighton ? Jericho ?—None of these places exactly suited my ideas of a restful retreat, "Far from the madding crowd," such as I longed for at present. At length I decided to run down to W——, an out-of-the-way little watering-place, in which my old friend, Dr. Quorn, had bought a large house and a small practice some three years before. He was a cut-and-dried old bachelor, and for aught I knew, might be willing to receive me into his house during my brief holiday. At any rate, I should not be quite solitary, a stranger in a strange land, if I set up my tent in his neighbourhood.

And here I think it necessary to mention that the narration

which follows has nothing to do with me personally ; I am merely a go-between, as it were, from the Doctor to the reader. I shall endeavour to give a faithful report of what I heard from him in the course of conversation, and shall furthermore present the reader with a copy of a letter subsequently received from him : for the rest, I shall keep in the background as much as possible.

I found Dr. Quorn very comfortably settled in his house, with a cook who knew her business, and a housekeeper completely *au fait* on everything connected with the management of an old bachelor's establishment. He readily agreed, or rather himself suggested, that I should become his guest while I stayed at W——.

One evening, when I had been with him about a week, we were sitting together in the miscellaneous apartment which was neither library, surgery, nor smoking-room, but a delightful mingling of all three ; having lit our cigars and sampled a certain particularly fine brand of old whisky, on the possession of which the Doctor prided himself, we fell into rather rambling conversation. Among the topics we discussed, was that of hypnotism and kindred subjects. The Doctor was rather latitudinarian in these matters, and was disposed to give greater credence to the reported results of unauthorized experiments than is usually considered orthodox by the faculty in general. We theorized on the subject of doppelgangers, and whether it was possible for a person to be absent from the body during the life of the latter. Presently the Doctor said :

“ Before I came here, I was acquainted with a gentleman named Thomas Blakewitch. He resided in a house which was his own property, situated in the neighbourhood of Gwillingham, where I was formerly in practice. A year before I left that place he disappeared, and I believe nothing has been heard of him since ; but his case has recently been brought to my recollection by a singular circumstance. He was a hypnotist, if ever there was one ; and moreover possessed of what I may call psychic powers, for which we at present lack a nomenclature.

“ The house in which he lived was a sort of ‘ Sprites’ Hall.’ It was an old, worm-eaten, fungus-webbed manor-house ; completely overrun with ivy in front, and shadowed behind by knotted, grotesque, witch-like trees, coeval with the mansion.

It was half surrounded by what had once been the moat, but was now a piece of stagnant water, coated with green scum ; over which was thrown the crazy wooden bridge that led to the front door. It was a place only fit for owls and ghosts, but Blakewitch seemed to think there was some affinity between the uncanniness of the house and the peculiar pursuits of its occupant. And," added the Doctor, with a twinkle in his eye, "I don't know but what he might be right."

"What pursuits do you allude to?" I asked.

"Oh, he had all sorts of hobbies. He was of a scientific turn ; indeed, our acquaintance began with his asking me to come and look at a curious machine he had had constructed from his own designs, and consisting of a powerful air-pump, attached to a long coffin-shaped receiver of ground glass ; the novel thing about it was the shape and size of the latter, and an arrangement of cogs and springs by which the pump was made to work automatically upon pressing a button *within* the receiver. He was very reticent respecting the use to which he intended to put this machine. Also, he was a good musician. I never," said the Doctor, who was an enthusiast on the subject, and himself no despicable performer on the violin—"I never heard such strange voluntaries as he would improvise when the mood was on him. Their character was deeply tragic for the most part, but there were wild modulations into lighter moods of melancholy tenderness, and snatches of fanciful melody ; in the brightest of which, however, ever and anon, a weird discord, like a Mephistophelean laugh, introduced the original *motif*, and sombre harmonies led on to the final crash, for," laughing, "he usually concluded with an earthquake. I daresay this sounds like nonsense to you—you don't care for music, or at least you don't *enthuse* over it. But the pursuits that I particularly alluded to were connected with the subjects we were speaking of : hypnotism and so forth. I believe he made experiments on everyone who would submit to them, and very likely tried to mesmerise himself. I have often wondered what he wanted that machine for. When he disappeared, his only living relative—a nephew—was staying at 'Sprites' Hall.' I had some correspondence with him—the nephew, I mean—and he informed me that he could not learn how his uncle had disposed of the machine, but it certainly was not in the house."

The Doctor paused to light a fresh cigar (he was a great smoker), and I asked :

“What about the disappearance ?”

“It happened just four years ago. Before that event, it had been noticed by the gossips of the neighbourhood that he sometimes was absent from home for days together, going and coming so mysteriously that nobody ever saw him depart or return. On this last occasion he went away in the same sudden and secret manner. Less notice would have been taken of his continued absence, if his nephew had not been his guest at the time.”

“And how was it accounted for ?” I enquired.

“There were all sorts of rumours afloat,” he replied. “It was even said that he had been murdered, and as his nephew was his only relation, there were some who did not hesitate to accuse him of committing the crime, in order to become possessed of his uncle’s property. These accusations, however, were never more than covertly suggested ; and I, for one, believe them to be entirely without foundation in fact. It was reported, also, that he had fled the country in order to escape his creditors ; but this is pure fiction, he was not in embarrassed circumstances. His nephew inserted advertisements in the leading newspapers and employed other means to discover what had become of him ; but all without effect. Altogether, it is one of the most curious cases I ever came across.”

Dr. Quorn sat silently puffing his cigar, apparently lost in reflection, for five minutes or so after he had said this ; and I rose from my seat to look at a photograph in a little frame of silver filigree, that stood on the mantelpiece. It was the portrait of a man of very striking appearance, unusually so, I thought. The features were clear cut, and extremely refined ; the hair and short beard, jet black ; the upper lip short and curved, like that of Apollo in the old Greek statues ; and the shape and “set” of the whole head almost ideally graceful. The eyes, however, were very singular. They were dark and deep, and full of fire : even the photograph revealed that ; but they had also such a vivid fixedness, such an intensity of expression, that I almost started when I encountered their glance, though they only gazed at me from framed cardboard.

“That,” said the Doctor, looking up, “is the portrait of the

man I have been speaking of—Thomas Blakewitch. He gave it to me a short time before he left Gwillingham—if he ever did leave it.”

As I returned to my seat I remembered that my host had said something about the case being recalled to his memory by something that had happened since he came to W——, and I asked him what were the circumstances he had alluded to.

“It can only be a coincidence, a remarkable resemblance,” Dr. Quorn answered. “And yet, to me, there is something inexplicable about it. Shortly after I came to this place, or about eighteen months after Blakewitch was missing from his home, I was summoned to the bedside of a man ill of fever. His name is Bryant Stubbs, and he is a one-armed man. Understand me, the loss of his arm is not recent; nor indeed is it a mutilation that he suffers from: he was born so. That should go far to prove his identity! Nevertheless, when on approaching the bed, I caught the first view of my patient, I could have sworn that Thomas Blakewitch was lying before me. The expression of his eyes (have you noticed the keen look of those in the portrait?), the curl of the lip, nay, the very moulding of the features—was exact: it was Thomas Blakewitch to the life.

“But something far more extraordinary was to follow. This man was in a fever, and at times delirious. Now, what do you think? During his raving fits, he constantly spoke of Gwillingham, he mentioned things that had formed subjects of conversation between Blakewitch and myself when alone together; ay, and actually repeated our very words. Sometimes he imagined he was playing a musical impromptu; at others, he was engaged in some occult experiment; and he talked about the air-pump and glass coffin I have mentioned. Now this man, Bryant Stubbs, was in poor circumstances; his education had been neglected; and his conversation, when in health, and during the intervals of consciousness when suffering from fever, was generally neither polished nor intellectual. I say ‘generally,’ because it happens that every now and then he reverts to this—what shall I call it?—abnormal condition, and mystifies me, and other people also, by the suddenness with which he puts off Bryant Stubbs, and assumes Thomas Blakewitch. And whenever this occurs, it is accompanied, or rather preceded, by a remarkable change in the cast of his features,



in his whole expression, even in the sound of his voice. Sometimes the change is instantaneous; at others it is gradual, one face coming slowly over the other, if I may so express myself: like the change from winter to spring, when the 'leaf' slide is pushed before the 'bare-bough' slide, at a magic-lantern entertainment. During the two-and-a-half years I have known him, there have been several transformations of this sort.

"Now, what do you think of all this? I may add that Stubbs has always lived at W——, and, so far as I can learn, has never been within a dozen miles of Gwillingham. What do you think of it?"

"Well," I replied, "it certainly seems very queer. I confess I cannot understand it. Are you sure you have not allowed your imagination to play you a trick, and exaggerate both the physical resemblance, and the coincidences of language and idiosyncrasy you speak of?"

"My dear Marc," answered Dr. Quorn, "do you think one trained in my profession would let himself be deluded by a fanciful imagination? It is usually the other way with us doctors; we are often accused of being too matter-of-fact, materialistic, or whatever you like to call it. No! I give you my word of honour, there is not the slightest shade of exaggeration in the account I have given you."

"Then," I said, "I own I am completely non-plussed, and unable to offer any suggestion that could help to solve the mystery."

A ring at the surgery bell put an end to our *tête-à-tête*.

"Wonder they've left me in peace so long," said the Doctor, as he hurried away. The rest of the evening I had to myself.

A few days after this conversation, Dr. Quorn and I sallied forth to explore some romantic ruins in the vicinity. My companion was something of an antiquary, and I was glad to have him for a guide. Some scenes in my unfinished novel were to be enacted in the apartments of an old castle; an inspection of the venerable fabric we were about to visit, would enable me to give additional picturesqueness to my descriptions.

It was a beautiful afternoon in early autumn. Heaven and earth were radiant. "The slumbrous light was rich and warm;" its mellow splendour transfigured the landscape; amber glory was spread over land and sea.

There is a great difference between spring and autumn sunshine. The sunshine of spring is intense, exhilarating ; it sparkles like new wine. It is bright and clear, but not sympathetic. It pours a searching ray on all the relics of the pitiless days when frosts bit deep, and ruin was abroad. As pitiless, it stares in the blushing face of every weak and tempest-draggled thing. It is not passionate ; it is like a vestal, beautiful but austere.

The autumn sunlight is of riper strain. Mellow ; subdued ; full of solemnity, but yet instinct with voluptuous languor. It loves to rest on the broad marble steps of palaces ; to strain itself through the gorgeous symbolism of painted windows ; to sleep on the crimson couch of the woods. It has sympathy. It broods over the grave of the dead spring ; luxuriates in the glad sentiment of harvest ; and flings its mournful pomp around the year's decline.

As we were turning down a narrow lane, the Doctor suddenly clutched my arm :

"Look there !" he whispered sharply.

I followed the direction of his eyes, and saw a man emerge from the fields into the high road ; he was of medium height and had but one arm. As he advanced towards us, I noticed the close resemblance between him, and the portrait of Blakewitch. The features in the one, and in the other seemed identical. Had I not heard the Doctor's story I should certainly have believed the portrait to be that of this stranger.

"This is Stubbs ; but he is Blakewitch 'just now,'" said the Doctor, with grim humour.

We stood at the angle of the lane, where it joined the road, and a clump of young trees that grew close to the path, effectually screened us from his view—though we could see him plainly enough—till he was just on us. I never saw such a change as came over that man's face when he perceived the Doctor. If he had had a mask hidden in his hat, and had let it drop down over his face that instant, the alteration would not have been greater or more sudden. It is impossible to explain in what way the change was effected. One noticed, however, that some of the most salient features became less accentuated, and *vice versa* ; some muscles tightened while others were relaxed ; lines appeared which were not visible before, and while the

eyelids became more drooping, the corners of the mouth assumed an upward curve.

Not only the face, but the whole man, seemed transformed. His figure seemed to swell out, his gait altered, and he appeared a different person altogether.

He bowed slightly to the doctor.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Stubbs," said Dr. Quorn.

"Good afternoon, sir," he replied, rather sullenly; but the voice thrilled me. There was something strange, almost unnatural, in its tones. It seemed a double voice, if I may say so, it was as if *two* persons had wished the doctor good afternoon, the one in a tenor key, the other in a bass; but the notes so *chorded* into one sound that it was impossible to separate them.

"There," said my friend, as the man passed on along the road, and we went down the lane, "now you have had ocular demonstration of what I told you the other night. I wish he had played the *rôle* of Blakewitch a little longer. I would then have stopped and entered into conversation with him, and when he *Stubbified* you would have been more able to judge of the wonderful power this man has of living a double life—of the way in which he unites two separate identities in his own mysterious individuality. But you see I did not exaggerate the effect of his physical transformation."

About a fortnight later my visit came to an end, and I returned to Town. My holiday had proved beneficial in all respects. I went back to my duties invigorated in body and mind; I believe my articles in the *Daily Fillip*, and the concluding chapters of my novel, bore ample testimony to the fact.

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## PART II.

From Julius Quorn, M.D., W—— to Antony Marc, Esq.  
London.

The Cedars, W——,

September 10th, 189—.

MY DEAR MARC,

When you were staying with me about this time last year, I related to you some rather curious circumstances in connection with the case of a person with whom I was formerly acquainted—one Thomas Blakewitch. I have no doubt you

remember the facts, and therefore I need not recapitulate them. You saw the photo of Blakewitch, and, if my memory serves me, we once met the man Bryant Stubbs, when you witnessed the extraordinary change of feature to which he was subject. As you seemed greatly interested in this case, I think you will like to know something more of it, and therefore send you the particulars of a recent event which go far to elucidate the mystery.

Well, Bryant Stubbs is dead, and I have just come from his funeral. During his illness, which was a rapid decline, the duplication of his nature, as I may term it, became more pronounced. The changes occurred with greater frequency, and the difference between the *two* (you know what I mean) was very observable. As Stubbs, he was irritable, obstinate, and sometimes coarse in his expressions; as Blakewitch, he made no complaint of his bodily sufferings, and was always gentle in manner, though occasionally eccentric in speech. There was a doggedness in his behaviour in the former character, in strange contrast with his manner when posing in the latter.

During the last three weeks, however, the Blakewitchian element apparently gained the upper hand; I can now understand how this came to pass, and so will you, when you have read my letter. The man interested me, and I gave more time to him than, in the interests of my other patients, I could well afford to spare.

Something appeared to be troubling his mind, and he often seemed on the point of making me his confidant, but the instant he opened his lips that change, which you have seen as well as I, came over him, and he resumed the dogged sullenness of Stubbs.

The day before he died, however, he opened his mind to me fully. The statement he made is, I believe, unprecedented in its strangeness, yet it seems to offer the only possible solution of what has so often puzzled me. However, you shall judge.

I was sitting by his bedside, when I observed him fix his eyes on me with a most intense expression. It was the very glance of my Gwillingham acquaintance. I asked if I could do anything for him. He requested the nurse to leave the room, and when we were alone, said :

“I do not know what good it will do, but I feel I must tell

you some things about myself which you will hardly believe, but which are, nevertheless, perfectly true. If no good results to me from making you my confidant, at least the narrative will serve to warn others from that trifling with the mysteries of nature which has proved so unhappy in my instance. But first, do you know who is speaking to you?"

"Of course," I answered. "I have always understood your name is Bryant Stubbs, and I know you to be an inhabitant of this parish."

He rejoined: "It is indeed the body of Bryant Stubbs you see before you, and his spirit, though dormant just now, is present in that body—but in company with another, which speaks to you by the lips of Bryant Stubbs, but is, in fact, the spirit of Thomas Blakewitch."

"Wandering in his mind," thought I, and yet the mention of the last name gave me a curious sensation. However, if he was out of his senses, it was best to humour him, so I assumed a matter-of-fact air, and enquired:

"Where is your body then?"

"That," said the voice, "I will tell you presently. I can read your thoughts. I know you feel incredulous, but hear me patiently, and I will endeavour to make myself as intelligible as possible.

"You are aware," the speaker continued, "that during the time you were in practice at Gwillingham, I was engaged in certain experiments, some of them in connection with hypnotism, but I now tell you that my investigations extended to subjects yet more obscure. In particular, I wished to find out whether it was possible for the spirit to leave the body previous to death, and, if so, whether the separation would be permanent. If it was free to come and go at will, as we daily walk in and out of our houses, I foresaw we should be enabled to increase our knowledge of this planet, and probably of other worlds, to an indefinite extent. We have it on the authority of the greatest uninspired writer of ancient or modern times, that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy, and I thought the mere imaginable possibility of the thing should incite us to investigations that might one day lead to its realisation. Briefly, my researches assured me that it could be done, and the results of my experiments eventually

enabled me to disengage my spirit from its fleshly tenement, without inflicting any injury upon the material portion of my being. The risk, at the first trial, was awfully great, as there was a chance that I might be mistaken in my conclusions respecting the possibility of a return to the body. But I made the venture, and found that by an exertion of will I could soar through space, while my body remained in a comatose state, indeed, quite inert and corpse-like, and that a similar effort restored me to that mortal habitation from which I had been so strangely absent. I may mention that I found myself still confined to our own planet. There were insuperable impediments to my advance beyond the limits of this world. Within those limits I was free to wander wherever I listed. Of what I saw and felt in my disembodied condition I am unable to give an account. My thoughts are exercised night and day with the wonders of which I then obtained a knowledge, but I lack words capable of giving them expression."

"How is it possible," I interrupted, "for you to think without the aid of words?"

"Thought, as well as emotion, can exist without the symbols of language," he answered. "The lower creation may convince you of this. Watch a dog dreaming: he imitates the motions of the chase, he licks the hand that does not caress him, and so on; thought must be going on in his brain, for his eyes and senses are closed to the apprehension of outward objects. Has then a dog a vocabulary? is he possessed of language in which to clothe his ideas?"

"Monkeys are said to have a speech of their own," I said flippantly.

"That is begging the question. But to resume. My aerial excursions increased in frequency and extent, and I became alarmed lest some accident should befall the body from which I was absent, sometimes for weeks; or lest the action of the air and other causes should give rise to the decay to which, in its inanimate state, it was peculiarly liable. In order to avert this danger, I invented the machine you saw in my house. When I wished to quit my earthly tenement, I placed myself in the large glass receiver, and, pressing the button, set the machinery in motion. My spirit then took flight, while the air-pump exhausted the air from the receiver; and thus my body remained

hermetically sealed up from the disintegrating influences of the atmosphere. The machine itself was deposited in a secret vault under the old house where I lived. There it remains ; and my body is now lying preserved in its glass coffin, as fit for the re-incarnation of its spirit as on the day, four years ago, when I quitted it."

"Then," I asked, "why in the name of common sense, don't you return to it?"

"There comes in the terrible part of my story," was the reply. "When, after an absence of several weeks, I returned to the vault, judge of my horror at finding the receiver empty ; my body had disappeared."

I was getting interested, as was shown by my exclamation at this point.

"I thought you said it was lying there now?" I said.

"So it is. It has been replaced—but listen! It was an awful time with me till I found what had become of it. It appears that Bryant Stubbs had somehow, by the merest accident, made the discovery that had cost me so much thought and toil—I mean, how to cast himself loose from the body without committing suicide. His spirit, wandering about, perceived my body lying where I left it, and straightway entered into it. I had no resource but to take possession of the one which was his own property, and then endeavour to make him quit mine. But he would not. He found the body he now possessed more convenient than the one he was born in ; for the former was perfect, while the latter was minus an arm!"

Here, I am sorry to say, I could not forbear laughing.

"It was no laughing matter to me," said my interlocutor. "As persuasion was of no avail, I determined to hypnotise him ; and while he was in the trance, I removed him to the house at Gwillingham, and placed him in the receiver ; and then I suggested to him that he should, immediately on awaking, return to his own body, and there remain. You know these mesmeric suggestions are always complied with. Accordingly, no sooner had I made the necessary passes, than he awoke and entered his own body, in which I was."

"But why did you not thereupon assume your own?"

"Alas! I speedily discovered I was powerless to make that impression on the brain, by means of my will, which was

necessary in order to detach spirit from matter, while his will was also acting in opposition to mine. You cannot conceive with what intense effort I attempted to do so ; but though I once or twice very nearly succeeded, his will was never entirely subdued, and I have never been able to escape from a thralldom which is abhorrent to me. The reason why he refused to release me was this: he found it very convenient to sink his own identity in mine whenever he had occasion to conceal that identity. Some of the transactions in which he has been engaged are not very reputable, but he was thus enabled to elude the unpleasant consequences resulting from them. Besides, by this means he obtained admittance where he would otherwise have met with scornful rejection. And as one brain served for both, any pleasure I enjoyed in those refinements to which he was a stranger, was reflected to his mind, which received the sensation, without appreciation of the cause. So here we are, two souls in one body!

"Since his illness I have not been so liable to such complete effacement at the will of another as was previously the case. Enfeebled in mind—the sympathetic result of bodily weakness,—he is no longer able to restrain me from proclaiming these facts. Formerly I had power to make only momentary revelations ; his spirit clouded over mine before I had time to seek advice or consolation. It was always on the watch. Even now it is by an effort that I continue my communications. I am holding him down, as it were, all the time.

"But if he dies, as seems likely, from his present illness, I think I shall escape at last ; for as my spirit does not belong to the body in which it is now confined, there is no probability of its being dismissed from the world at the dissolution of that body. However, directly the latter event takes place, I wish you to proceed to Gwillingham. I may be there to welcome you, but if not, you will see to the security of the vault where my mortal remains are deposited."

He then described the situation of the vault, and the manner in which I could obtain access to it. We had some further conversation not needful to repeat. At a quarter to one that night Bryant Stubbs died. Nothing remarkable occurred on that occasion. My letter has spun out to such inordinate length that I shall not trouble you with any observations or reflections.



To-morrow I set out for Gwillingham, I will let you know the result of my visit. In the meantime, I am,

My dear Marc,

Yours faithfully,

JULIUS QUORN.

P.S.—I have this moment received a telegram from Blake-witch's nephew. He says, "Uncle suddenly returned. Extremely weak, otherwise well. Requests your immediate attendance."

I shall take the night train to Gwillingham.

WM. E. LANHAM.

# The Thirteenth of February.

A CASE FOR THE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY.

## CHAPTER I.

PHYSICIANS' stories seem to find some favour with the public now-a-days, and it has occurred to me, Samuel Jefferson, M.D., L.R.C.P. Lond., that there is a true incident in my early life which is worth the telling, and which, after this lapse of time, I am at full liberty to relate. I think the more of it, perhaps, because it is the only mystery which I have encountered in a career which has been, on the whole, very placid, very successful, and very commonplace. Of course, like all men who have been in general practice, I have witnessed many scenes of severe physical suffering, of sad bereavement, of heart-rending grief. But the conditions of human sorrow, like the symptoms of disease, repeat themselves, and mere familiarity with them as part of the common lot, tends to deaden the impression which they make at first. But this particular experience was so out of the ordinary course that I have never forgotten its remotest detail, and it presents to my mind a problem which something beyond medical science is needed to solve.

On the thirteenth of February, in a year early in the sixties, a serious railway accident occurred on the London and North Western system, not far from Preston. It was due to the blunder of a sleepy pointsman, who had shunted the down express from London on to the wrong line, with the result that it crashed into a goods train, and several of the carriages were thrown off the line. Most of the passengers escaped with a shaking, but several were badly injured, and one or two killed. Among the killed was Mr. Jonathan Rollit, a good friend and valued patient of mine, who was found crushed under the wreck of a first-class compartment, with a curious jagged wound at the back of his head, which everybody agreed must have been inflicted by a portion of the ironwork of the carriage. There was every indication that he had met his death instantaneously.

It was about two years before this sad event that I had come to know Mr. Rollit through being called in to attend him pro-

fessionally. He was almost my first patient, and I do not know how he came to send for me, as there were many men of old standing and large reputation in the neighbourhood. He had newly come to live in Harold Avenue, however, and as I had a share in the corner house of a road leading off the avenue, he had probably noticed my name in big letters on the very large brass plate which I had been careful to affix to the gate. Wanting a doctor, he had simply, in the happy-go-lucky way which characterized him in many things, sent for the nearest.

However, we soon became familiar. I had plenty of time on my hands, and as he was a little fidgetty about his health, and was liberal enough in the matter of fees, I devoted myself very carefully to his case. He was a tall, stout, red-faced man of sixty-two, with a shrewd, merry look in his eyes, and in the wrinkles at the corners of them. He was one of those men, in fact, who laugh with their eyes and the muscles about them, and seldom or never burst into a guffaw. You saw at a glance that he was a keen man of business who had had large dealings with the world, and never allowed the world to get the better of him, while he had not sacrificed his natural gaiety of temperament in the struggle. He was still a bit of a dandy, and his head of curly iron-grey hair and luxuriant beard and moustache had a well-groomed look about them. I soon found, in fact, that he had his little vanities, and rather liked being told that he bore his years well.

In truth he did look much younger than his age, and would have been a model of manly strength if the gout had not compelled him to walk with a stick. He lived alone with his adopted daughter, a sweet, pretty child of twelve or thirteen, to whom he was intensely attached. "She was the only child," he would explain, "of my old friend Paul Bergen, who was my partner in business in South Africa. We served together in a frontier row with the niggers, in which he was fatally hurt, but before he died he made me promise to protect his girl." "Strange," he would add, running his hand through the curls of the child, who was always fond of standing by his knee, "that he should have been shot when we thought the fight was over—shot in the back."

"You and he had the business between you?" I asked from idle curiosity.

"Well, yes," he replied hesitatingly, "except—except my half-

brother." And then, abruptly, as if he did not care to talk shop to a comparative stranger, he changed the subject.

We steadily became warm friends. With the quick eye of a man of business he saw that I understood my profession, and trusted me. But he saw also that I was a lonely young fellow without much of the world's goods to bless myself with, and with little work to do ; and he did his best to solace me for my disappointments, and to cheer me up. He was a patient one had to be indulgent with, as he had been accustomed to generous living—too generous—and it was not easy to bring him down to the necessary regimen. I induced him to give up the good claret which was his favourite drink at dinner, but I had hardly the heart to deny him his glass of whisky at night, especially as I generally shared it with him. After a time, in fact, I spent a large portion of my evenings at 16, Harold Avenue, having obtained a promise from the young solicitor and his young wife who shared the house at the corner with me, that the maid of all work should be promptly sent along to Mr. Rollit's in case a patient wanted me. That did not often happen in those days.

At first I only treated my patient for the gout, and nothing else may then have ailed him. But it did not need much professional acumen to see, after a time, that something else was wrong. He was still fond of merry talk and rather full-blooded jokes, but he had sudden unexplained absences of mind, during which the expression on his face would change to one of gravity, concern, and even apprehension. If he was spoken to he would start suddenly and look behind him, and then, recovering himself, burst into laughter, which, as I have said, was not customary with him, and which was evidently affected.

One day I took the bull by the horns. "Your nerves are rather out of order," I said.

I could see he did not like the subject, but he put the best face on it possible. "Well, yes," he said, treating the matter lightly. "I am not quite what I once was. I suppose we lose nerve as we get older." Then he added with greater seriousness, "The fact is, I often wake in the middle of the night and lie thinking for a long time. Can you give me something to make me sleep?"

I prescribed for him as best I could, but the more I saw of him the more certain I felt that his case was not one to be met

by drugs. Despite his good humour, he was not the kind of man who would be "pumped" too obviously. However, week by week this nervousness gained upon him—and one night, after one of these strange absences of mind, he said to me suddenly :

"Promise me, Jefferson, that if anything happens to me unexpectedly, you will keep an eye on my little Lucy. She will be well provided for, but it is a strange world, and no one knows what may happen."

I gave the promise, thinking that it was only to gratify a fancy. Then he laughed again in the strained way I had noticed of late. "I am getting a little morbid," he said, "I suppose it is the gout."

This, however, did not deceive me, and I noticed that as the winter set in he became anxious about every post. One night as we were sitting smoking together, a letter with the Cape Town postmark was brought into the room. He opened it eagerly, glanced at the contents, and then flung it into the fire with the exclamation "Right!" as if he had been answering a challenge or closing a bargain. He had the air of a man who had been haunted by some indefinite peril, but was now face to face with it, and ready to brave it out.

From that time the fidgettiness of manner forsook him, and a determined and somewhat reserved demeanour took its place. One day he said to me as if half in a joke : "Do you think I am a man who could bear a big shock and yet keep his mental balance?"

"Why, yes," I replied, "what makes you ask that?"

"You see there was insanity in our family, my father went off his head."

"Oh! you are morbid again," I said. "Any more of this, and I shall order you away for a change—perhaps to South Africa."

For a few weeks after this I almost lost sight of my friend. He was so continually absorbed in his business papers that I hesitated to call upon him, and when I did so he did not, after his usual fashion, press me to stay. Late one afternoon, however, I went to see him at his urgent request, and found him gloomier and more possessed of diseased fancies than ever. We had not been talking long when his eye fell on the calendar which hung beside the study fireplace. "The twelfth of February," he ejaculated, and "to-morrow will be the thirteenth. That is a bad day for me. My father died by his own hand on

that day, and that, too, was the date of poor Paul Bergen's death. But," he added, with an effort to recover himself, "I did not send for you to talk this rubbish," and we resumed our conversation, which was mainly about his movements. He explained to me that his half-brother was coming from South Africa in order to make some important arrangements with regard to the business, and that he himself might have to be away from London for a time.

We had finished our talk and I had taken up my hat to go when the servant brought a card into the room which he took, with an exclamation of surprise. "Here so soon," he muttered between his clenched teeth, and then turning to me with a formalism I was totally unaccustomed to on his part, "Doctor," he said, "I need not detain you. We shall resume our pleasant evenings in a week or two."

On the stairs I came face to face with a creature whose appearance for a moment took my breath away. It was that of a little distorted man, apparently about fifty years of age, with one shoulder higher than the other, and one disproportionately long muscular arm, which swung beside him like that of a chimpanzee. What struck me most, however, was not the strangeness of the figure, but the extraordinary caricature which his features presented to those of Mr. Jonathan Rollit. It was as if I had caught sight of my friend's face in one of those distorting mirrors in which children delight to see themselves. But beside this, his cheeks were colourless, his straggling hair, coal black in hue, allowed patches of a large bladder-like head to be seen, and he moved with a shambling gait. He was shabbily dressed and wore on the side of his head a little round hat which he had not troubled to remove. He passed me whistling in a curiously harsh, repellent way\* between his teeth, and for a moment I caught the full expression of his face. It was one of a sullen, concentrated ferocity, strangely mixed with a look of insolence and flippancy, and of the cheap cunning of a would-be man of the world. In addition to all this there was something uncanny in his restless eyes which I cannot describe. "If there is madness in the family," I thought to myself, "there should be a share of it *there*."

Before I was out of the door I heard high words as of two men quarrelling.



## CHAPTER II.

IT was a day or two after this that taking up my morning paper I saw a full account of the accident to which I have referred. My friend's name was correctly given, for his card-case had been found in his pocket, though excepting this he had little else about him beside some loose money. My grief was very genuine, for I had learnt to love and respect the man ; but even this was overshadowed by a sudden sense of responsibility. I remembered the pledge which I had given him in regard to his ward, Lucy Bergen, and began revolving in my mind what steps I should take to give effect to it. He had told me very little about his private affairs, but I fortunately remembered one thing, that although he preferred to reside in London the head-quarters of his business were in Glasgow, and that his solicitors were Messrs. M'Kenzie and Son, of that city. I had once met the "Son," who was really the head of the firm and an old school-fellow of Jonathan Rollit's, at his house in Harold Avenue.

I put myself into communication with the firm, and found them most anxious to afford me all the information in their power. It was certain that Mr. Carl Rollit now became sole proprietor of the business, but as to Mr. Jonathan Rollit's savings—and they must have been large, for he was on the point of withdrawing from the business altogether—they knew no more than I did. Presumably, in absence of a will and the non-existence of any near relative, Mr. Carl Rollit would inherit this also, and they knew of no provision for Mr. Jonathan's ward, Miss Bergen. "Still," added Messrs. M'Kenzie and Son cheerfully, "Mr. Carl Rollit is now practically his brother's sole heir, and as a Rollit he is certain to act honourably and even generously in the matter. You have only to lay the case before him."

There was a private and confidential note appended to this in Mr. Alexander M'Kenzie's own handwriting, in which he said that Jonathan Rollit had repeatedly talked of making a will in favour of his ward. "But Jonathan," he added, "was always a little odd in his ways and he seemed to be driving things off until he had withdrawn from the business. He never seemed to care besides to discuss the possibility of his own death. You must see Carl Rollit at once."

That was all very well, but I did not know where to find Mr. Carl Rollit, nor, as it turned out, did the people in Glasgow, who thought that he had gone to London to complete the formalities in connection with the administration of the estate. My embarrassment will be easily imagined. Here was I, as poor as a rat myself, suddenly called upon to take charge of a penniless girl, who as far as I knew was without a friend in the world. Suddenly, however, another consideration crossed my mind which put all these anxieties in the shade. Supposing Carl Rollit should put in an appearance at the house in Harold Avenue? The child would then be in his power, and when I remembered the look of the man and the strange expression in his eyes, I shuddered at the thought. I might be doing him an injustice—he might for all I knew be the most benevolent of beings. But there are some faces which haunt you.

Lucy had not yet learnt the terrible news, as she was not a reader of the newspapers, and before I broke it to her I had taken steps to provide her with another home. I put the case before my solicitor fellow-tenant and his wife, and like the good-hearted creatures they were, they at once agreed to take the child temporarily into their charge, while I solaced myself with the reflection that the half-brother must soon put in an appearance if only to take possession of the house in Harold Avenue and the furniture. But he did not do so, and after a few weeks the house was sold by a firm of local agents acting under written instructions.

From that time my search for Carl Rollit began in earnest, as it ought to have done earlier, when I could have traced him easily. I enlisted the friendly offices of Mr. M'Kenzie, but he could do little, as Carl Rollit had paid only one hasty visit to the office in Glasgow, to give the experienced manager there *carte blanche* as to the business, and had then disappeared completely. No great surprise was felt about this as his erratic character was very well known to everybody connected with the firm. The Glasgow people were under the impression that he had gone back to South Africa to see how things were progressing in connection with the Cape Town Branch, of which he had formerly been the nominal manager, although it was said a very neglectful one. So I wrote several letters to Cape Town, without, however, getting any answer.



Once a curious thing happened to me. I was crossing Harold Avenue late one afternoon when I ran dead against a man whom I could for the moment have sworn to be none other than Carl Rollit himself. But he was entering a cab at the moment and before I could hail him he had driven off, so I had no means of deciding whether my impression was right or wrong, and on reflection I dismissed it as mere fancy.

So the weeks and months drew on, and my responsibility in connection with my charge grew greater. Her education could not be altogether neglected, and I had to do what I could for her in this matter. But my practice was looking up a bit, and I did not grudge the sacrifice, especially as I had grown very fond of the girl for the sake of her pretty face and winning ways.

Early in the new year I received a letter in the well-known handwriting of the head of the firm of M'Kenzie. It was not an official communication, but an urgent personal appeal from Mr. M'Kenzie himself.

"Can you come to Glasgow at once?" he asked. "I have news for you which I can best impart in a private talk. I have not lost sight of the interests of my old school-fellow's ward, and I have been making enquiries, which have had curious results. But come as soon as you can, and let no one in London know of your plans."

I started by the evening express a few days later—on a dark, wild, gusty night, without a star in the sky.

And now I am coming to the strange part of my tale—the part which I should like the Society for Psychical Research, or some other body of experts in supra-mundane matters, to explain for me. What I am about to relate may have been an hallucination or a dream, or the mere figment of a tired brain, but to me it had all the effect of a clear-cut reality, and I remember every incident which led up to it as clearly now—aye, and more clearly—than on the morrow of the occurrence, thirty years ago.

When the train started from Euston I had one fellow-traveller in the first-class compartment in which I had taken my seat. He was a typical bagman, a jolly, shrewd, loquacious, sociable little fellow, who did his best to engage me in conversation on every subject under the sun. But I was not much in the humour for talking. I had had my day's work to do before I started, and my mind was busy with speculation as to the meaning of the letter from Glasgow. After a time I fell into a doze, and when

I woke, we were, as I found afterwards, approaching Preston. My sharp companion, who had apparently been occupying his time by making notes in a pocket-book with a stylographic pen, saw my eyes open, and like a hawk he was on me again.

"Cur'ous thing, sir," he said, in his quick, pleasant way. "Have you ever noticed on dark nights like this how clear the reflection of the compartment is if you look out of the windows? Might fancy all the time that there was another train running beside you, if you did not see your own double so clearly. I have been looking at you out of the window while you were sleeping, and I could almost have read the paper on your knee. Fact is, of course, it is too dark to see anything outside, and the windows are like looking-glasses."

I observed, with a yawn, that it was rather funny. While we were talking, the train stopped at the station, and my companion got out with a cheery good night. We started again, and, drawing my rug closely round me—for it was getting very cold—I composed myself to sleep.

Somehow or other we had hardly got well clear of the station, and were going again at full speed, when the parting observations of my companion came back to me. There was something strange—something almost uncanny about the vividness of the reflection outside keeping company with the train throughout its journey. I turned my head to look at it, and noted how each article in the compartment had its image thrown by the lights of the carriage on the bosom of the night. As I did so, I saw something which made the blood leave my lips, and a thrill pass down my back.

There were still two figures in the compartment outside.

I rubbed my eyes and looked again. The bags in the carriage, the newspapers on the seats, the very foot warmers, were accurately pictured. But there unmistakably were the figures of two men sitting opposite each other in the corner seats of the compartment. I seemed in a vague way to see my own reflection in the phantom carriage, but I was not one of the two.

The men were too closely muffled up in overcoats and travelling caps to be easily recognisable, and their faces were turned partly away from me. I could see, however, that the man who was sitting with his back to the engine was of strikingly tall stature as compared with the little deformed man who sat opposite him.

The tall man had an ordinary office cash-box on his knees. It was open, and from the bottom of it he took out several documents which he showed to his companion one after the other, reading them in fact with his finger travelling along each line. Evidently the tall man was laying the law down in a peremptory fashion, and there was something about his whole attitude which bespoke determination. The other was as evidently giving a sullen and angry acquiescence in the proposals of his companion.

The tall man replaced the documents and locked the cash box, which he placed beside him. He then knelt down to pull a bag from under the seat, evidently with the intention of replacing the box.

Suddenly the deformed man sprang to his feet, and seizing the cash box by the handle, dealt his companion a desperate blow on the back of the head with one of its sharp corners. I seemed to hear the crash and the muffled groan which followed it, and to see the blood spurt from the wound. Then the murderer turned full on me a terrible face, distorted with mingled savagery and fear.

It was the face of Carl Rollit.

I had an instinct to cry out, and then to lay hold of the communicating cord and stop the train. But before I could do so, something went wrong with the train itself; there was a desperate crash, and I sat up suddenly, rubbing my eyes. The train had only drawn up for a moment against the signals, and from the reflection of the compartment on the outside the images of the two men and all that appertained to them had disappeared utterly. There remained only the figure of myself comfortably ensconced in one of the corners.

I must have been asleep. "What a beastly dream," I thought, as I settled myself for the rest of my journey. But a moment later, a thought flashed across my mind, "Why, this is the thirteenth of February!"

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### CHAPTER III.

ALEXANDER M'KENZIE received me at his house on the footing of an old friend, and it was not until we were alone late at night, and had had more than one go of "Auld Kirk," as he

called his first-rate whisky, that he approached the real object of my visit.

He had strange news to tell. The search for Carl Rollit had become a systematic one, for the acting manager for the firm in Glasgow was in despair at not being able to consult him in regard to important operations which had become imperative. It was ascertained that he had been twice in Cape Town, that he was wild and strange in his demeanour when there, and could not be induced to talk on business topics, and that he had no sooner arrived, than he began to make preparations for his return. He seemed to be under an impulse which kept him constantly moving. One morning he turned up unexpectedly at the Glasgow office when the manager was absent, and promised to return in the afternoon. But he never came. For a while, letters in regard to business matters were received from him, bearing the London postmark, but having no address. But after the second visit to Cape Town even these ceased, and Carl Rollit disappeared from view altogether.

It became, however, even more and more necessary to discover his whereabouts, and Mr. M'Kenzie, at the request of the manager for the firm, put a private detective on his track. "Fortunately," he observed, "his is not a difficult figure to detect, and he dresses always in the same fashion.. A fortnight ago the detective discovered him at Euston station. It was in the evening, and he was making across the platform for the Scotch express, but the detective found the cabman who brought him to the station. That cabman had a very strange story indeed to tell, but you will probably be able to hear it from his own lips.

"Then," I interrupted, "Carl Rollit is in London."

"Not only in London—but here comes the strange part of it. Not only is he London, but he is living within a stone's throw of you, in a dirty little thoroughfare called Paradise Street, which I daresay you know by name. There is a fried-fish shop there, the proprietor of which does not condescend to live over his shop, but Mr. Carl Rollit, the head of Rollit and Company, does. He lives all alone, they say, though the daughter of the fish-shop-keeper occasionally cleans out his rooms for him."

"Good Heavens! What is the meaning of it?"

Mr. M'Kenzie touched his head with his forefinger. "Mad," he said, "mad as a March hare. There is a strain of insanity in

the family. His father went like that, and Heaven only knows what Mr. Carl's mother was like. I have heard strange things.—But," he continued after a pause, "I thought it as well you should know these facts at once. It can hardly be an accident that he has taken up his residence in such close proximity to you, and madmen do strange things. It is as well to be on your guard."

"He is not mad enough to be put under arrest?" I asked.

"Oh, no," replied Mr. M'Kenzie; "to outward seeming, he is sane; and if a man of fortune chooses to live over a fried-fish shop, that is his concern. This is a free country. What puzzles me most is, that he has been tracked, more than once, making for the Scotch Express at night, and yet I can find no trace of his arriving."

"Thank you," I said; "I have no fear for myself, but Lucy is often out alone, and I shall have to keep guard over her." As I spoke, my experience in the train flashed across my mind, but I said nothing about it. People only laugh at these things.

Mr. M'Kenzie lighted a fresh cigar and continued—"But I did not send for you merely to tell you this. There is something of more practical importance. I have—almost by an accident—ascertained beyond doubt that, immediately before leaving London on his fatal journey, Mr. Jonathan Rollit did make a will. It was duly signed in the City before two witnesses, who signed it also, although they were practically strangers—except in a purely business way—to the testator. It seems to have been made in obedience to a sudden impulse—probably as the result of a presentiment. Whether he left the will in London, or took it away with him, I do not know, but that is what we must find out, if it is not too late. There appears to be no question, as far as I can gather, that he left Euston alone."

"Then what ought I to do?"

"I want you to put yourself into communication with my detective, and try to find out whether Carl Rollit is approachable. Probably he has his lucid intervals, and he ought to know something about the will. There is one thing—he can hardly have much use for the money."

I started home next day, being not a little anxious about my *protégée*, and at once sent for the detective. He was a clean-



shaven, keen-eyed young fellow—not the miracle of ingenuity and perspicacity which we expect upon the stage, but conscientious, and alive to his business. Following his advice, I doffed my professional chimney-pot hat, and went along with him to the cab-rank, some little distance away.

Here we found a typical Jehu in charge of a fairly smart hansom—a red-nosed, weather-beaten, asthmatical man, much muffled up against the weather. My companion, pretending to catch sight of him by accident, bade him good day, and followed this up with an invitation to both of us to have a drink. The driver, nothing loth, called on a ragged loafer who was near at hand to “Keep an eye on the keb,” and we went together into the most private compartment we could find in the big gin-palace at the corner. The detective broached the subject:

“When I see’d you just now,” he remarked, artlessly, “I was telling this pal of mine here about that rum cove you are always driving to Euston. But I can’t remember the perticklers, and I ain’t good at a story, like you! *You* tell him.”

The red-nosed cabman looked at me suspiciously, and as I lived in the neighbourhood I was half afraid he recognised me. But he seemed satisfied, and became quite loquacious, especially after the detective suggested that, as it was cold weather, another two-pen’north of gin wouldn’t hurt him.

“I ain’t the sort,” he said, “to run down a good fare, and the gen’l’mán has always been very liberal with me. But what I know, the other chaps on the rank must know, or at least, they knows a lot about it. ‘Ere’s a cove as you wouldn’t think, seein’ where he lives, had got a sixpence to spare, comes night after night and takes a hansom keb to Euston station, and pays me four shillin’s like a good ‘un, when he could do it from the Avenue by the ‘bus for four-pence. Comes, too, mind you, to the rank always at the same time, never givin’ a chap a minit to spare, and never arxin’ you to call for him at his ‘ouse. Never speaks a word, in fact; comes up to me, gits into the hansom and sits down. Then I jumps up, drives like blazes to the station, and he gits out, shoves the money into my ‘and, and goes away without saying anything. I’ve druv some rum coves in my time, but, blime me, if he ain’t the rummest.”

“But how long has this been going on?” I asked, in as indifferent a tone as I could affect.

"Well, let me see," replied the cabman, who plainly was in no hurry to finish his story, now that he had got two interested listeners and a relay of grog. "It was just twelve months ago last Friday (that, by the way, was the day on which I started for Glasgow) that I see'd the gen'l'man first. He came rushing out of a big 'ouse in the Avenue with a little black bag in one 'and. He waves this bag and I stops. 'How long does it take you,' says he, 'to drive to Euston?' 'Do it easy,' says I, 'in half-an-hour.' I know'd it wasn't easy, but I'd done it two or three times, and thought I could do it again. 'Will that ketch the Scotch express?' says he, 'because, ketch that train I must. There's a friend of mine goin' by it, an' he's left his bag.' 'That 'ull be all right,' says I; and we got to the station in good time. 'Shall I wait?' says I, as he was a-payin' me, thinking he might be goin' back. 'No,' says he, sharp, and I druv away."

"Well, what then?" my companion and I asked, in a breath.

"Well, then I see'd nothing of him for three or four months, and then, one evenin', he comes to me exact at the time we started before. He gits into the keb, and I says, 'Euston?' He says nothin', and I drives on, and gits there just in time for the train. He steps out, pays me, and goes off. Well, that went on from time to time during the summer, but not frequent, and I shouldn't have thought much of it if I hadn't discovered his rum diggins, and he hadn't been so silent and had no baggage."

He stopped to finish his gin and water.

"However," he resumed, "I see'd it was growin' on him; gradually he came oftener and oftener, till at last it come to twice and three times a week; and last week, hang me, if it wasn't every night. It was like a chap takin' to drink. Never shall I forgit Friday night. We was gittin' close to the station, but the roads was slippery, and down falls the 'oss. 'Course, a crowd gathered round at once, and began fiddlin' with the animal, doin' more harm than good. So I gits down from my perch to help, and then I ketches sight of the cove's face. You never see'd anything like it. He was leaning forward and straining his eyes on a clock which was near. If we hadn't got that 'oss up at once, I bet he'd just have flung hisself out and bolted for the train. But we managed it all right, and then he throws hisself back and takes a deep breath. 'Course, he can't have been always goin' to Scotland; and my opinion is, he'd no

need to go there for his job. I ain't seen him now for some nights, but I know he'll begin it again; he can't help it. I'll tell you what—that man's got some spell laid on him, and I only hope that old Nick won't come to my bed-side some night, and demand the fares he's paid me, back again."

Seeing that there was no more gin forthcoming, the cabman fastened his muffler over his mouth and prepared to go.

"And you should see," he added as we left the building, "what he's come to. He warn't niver much to look at, but now he's like a humpty little skelenton, and his 'ed's bigger than ever. I'd rather be outside the keb than in when I've got him on board."

The cabman's story set me thinking, but I was so possessed with the idea that Carl Rollit was simply insane, I that was not greatly astonished. Madmen play curious tricks, and this frequent repetition of a particular course of action is very common with them—especially with monomaniacs. I was chiefly concerned to know whether Carl Rollit was sufficiently sane to talk business. I resolved to intercept him the first time I saw any opportunity.

The cabman was, however, wrong in supposing that his eccentric fare would quickly require his services again. Several months passed and he was not seen again near Paradise Street. I have reason to believe, indeed, from what I gathered afterwards, that he had been out to South Africa—possibly having in a lucid interval resolved to rid himself of his infatuation. I even had a letter from Glasgow stating that he had sent instructions with regard to his business which had every appearance of sanity, though he still abstained from giving any exact address. In my heart I blamed the detective for letting the bird fly away so easily.

One day, however, in the following winter the detective called upon me.

"It is all right," he said, "our man is back. The same cabman has driven him three or four times to the station. He is at the old game."

I began by sending a note to Carl Rollit's lodgings asking for an appointment. It was not answered. After waiting a week or two, I sent a more urgent letter to the same purport.

This also proved useless, and I took then, as far as my professional work would allow me, to keeping a strict watch on



the fried-fish shop in Paradise Street. But I never caught a glimpse of my man ; evidently he did not turn out in the day-time. The detective continued to report to me that his nightly visits to Euston were becoming steadily more frequent, and I determined to go to the cab rank at the appointed time.

I did so, and on two or three occasions I caught sight of him, but he seemed to see me, and he shuffled away and got into the cab before I could speak. Once I had a full look at him under a gas lamp, and I shall never forget the look of the deep-set eyes, the drawn pallid face and the shrivelled limbs, about which his apparel hung shapelessly like the clothes of a scarecrow. The old look of assurance and cunning had disappeared. He seemed like a man who had only one set purpose in life, and though he avoided me, he evidently only saw me as in a dream.

I had no right of course to thrust myself more obtrusively upon him. But one day a little unkempt, dirty creature, with touzelled hair and a big brown apron, came along to my surgery and begged me in a husky maid-of-all-work's voice, and with tears in her eyes, to go along to 18 Paradise Street.

"The gentleman is very ill, indeed, sir," she said. "Nobody's been to see him, and he ain't eat nothing these two days, and he's ravin' mad sometimes. He's mentioned your name once or twice."

I went along immediately—only too glad to solve the mystery—and entering the "private door" by the side of the fried-fish shop, climbed the ricketty staircase, which had not even a shred of carpet upon it, and entered a large, tumble-down apartment, the only furniture in which was an old four-post maple bedstead and a dilapidated washstand. In the bed lay Carl Rollit, his white emaciated face forming a contrast to the dirty pillows, and his long, bony hands, with their blue veins and colourless finger-nails, extended on the counterpane. He was in a deep sleep, the sleep of exhaustion.

I sat by him a few minutes, and took his wrist between my finger and thumb, endeavouring to try the quick, feeble pulse. His eyes opened slowly, and then, raising himself with an effort on his elbow, he looked fixedly at me for a minute or two.

"Oh, yes, you're the doctor," he said at last in a dazed, weak way. "I sent for you, didn't I? You're going to make me well. I shall be all right at seven o'clock, shan't I?—seven o'clock, or eight o'clock at the very latest?"

"I will do what I can for you," I said, "but in the mean time you must be very quiet. Do not excite yourself."

"No," he said, still looking at me, "I will do all you tell me. But I must be well by seven o'clock, eight o'clock—a quarter past eight even, if I can get dressed. But I must catch the Scotch express," he continued in a changed tone of voice, and speaking with increasing emphasis, "I tell you I *must* catch it. It is a matter of life and death. I have had two nights here—I cannot stand another night. I tell you it will kill me."

I did my best to soothe him, and went away giving a prescription to the touzelled haired girl to get made up, and promising to call again at night. I returned later than I intended to, as I had other patients to call upon, and found Carl Rollit in a state of violent delirium, muttering, tossing about in the bed, gripping the bed-clothes, apparently enacting a feverish struggle with an imaginary foe. I sat by him, doing what I could to alleviate his sufferings, and in the small hours of the morning he sank again into an exhausted slumber.

I called two or three times next day, and found my patient getting steadily worse. It was evident that the fever of the last day or two had been too much for his emaciated and enfeebled frame, and I saw that his case was hopeless.

It was not until evening that he seemed to recognise where he was, and then, making an effort to lift himself from the pillow, he looked with strange wild eyes first at me and then at the medicine, which stood untouched by the bedside.

"Ah!" he said, speaking in a hoarse whisper, and with a painful gulp after almost every word, "you see I have taken none of of your cursed drugs to-day, doctor. I knew you could do me no good. I knew I could do better without you. I am strong now—well. But I did not send for you to physic me. Do you know what I wanted?"

I thought it best to humour him.

"No," I said enquiringly.

"Look under the bed, you will find a bag there. Quick—open it!"

Under the bedstead I found a travelling bag, and following the direction of his eyes, placed it on the foot of the bed.

"Open it," he repeated, "there is no time to spare."

I saw that the delirium was on him again.

"Not now," I said, gently pressing him back into the pillows. "Quiet yourself. We will open it together when you are better."

"You will find it all there," he muttered, in a curious, savage monotone. "The will is there, and I have not spent a farthing of the money. No, nor a farthing out of the business either—the family will have all that. No, not a farthing."

Here was a revelation, but I had no time to realise the full import of the words. While he was speaking he had been glaring wildly round the room, and his eyes fell on a cheap American clock which stood in the middle of the mantelpiece. With a superhuman effort he flung himself up into a sitting posture.

"Eight o'clock!" he cried, with a terrible shriek which froze my very marrow. "A quarter past eight, a quarter past—and this is the thirteenth of February. I shall be too late—too late! Let me alone. I tell you I must go. Right! Drive quick!—for God's sake, *drive quick!*"

Flinging his arms up with an appealing gesture, Carl Rollit fell back on the pillow—dead!

\* \* \* \* \*

A few days afterwards I opened the bag in the presence of Mr. M'Kenzie and a surviving relative of the Rollits—a distant cousin who took over the business, and whose sons carry it on still, I believe, under the old title. In the bag we found the cash-box, and in the bottom of the cash-box the will we had been in search of, roughly and hurriedly but legally drawn.

Lucy Bergen grew to womanhood, and has been for twenty years my devoted wife.

The old, red-nosed cabman plied his business from the rank at the end of Paradise Street for ten years longer before he was called over to the majority. He and I used often to talk over the mystery of Carl Rollit, but there was one strange hallucination I could never get out of his head—that on that terrible night in February he did drive Carl Rollit for the last time to Euston.

"It's no good," he would say, obstinately shaking his head. "I tell you I never druv so hard in my life. It was all we could do to ketch the train, but ketch it we did."

Was he right after all?

EDWARD ALLBUTT.

## The Creeping Shadow.

[*Extracts from the Diary of the late* REV. J. BURCOT, M.A.]

I AM sitting in my study in what is, I think, the very prettiest rectory in this country-side. My attitude towards my clerical neighbours' grounds and houses is certainly not Ahab's towards Naboth's vineyard. Yet, somehow, the feeling I have does not seem quite an innocent one. And, if it be not pride (I am certainly not a man conceited in my possessions), I wonder why it is not innocent. But there! it makes my head ache to try and think it out. And now I call to mind having noticed in myself of late a strange inability to follow up the simplest chain of argument; a dulness of the intellect akin to that dimness of vision which heralds the failing of the sight. And I fear my sight is going, for I now and then see a shadow whose presence cannot be accounted for by a corresponding substance. And what is this but dimness of the vision? It is but a trivial thing. But it strangely saddens me, as though it carried with it some deeper meaning; and I numbly wonder what that is!

[*Dated three months later.*]

Sitting here at my study table, I am looking out of my French window on the most charming garden man ever worked in, and you cannot taste the true sweetness of a garden unless you work in it with heart and soul. Every rose that nods at me in a friendly way I budded myself with my own hands.

\* \* \* \* \*

What is that gleaming white among the bushes? Ah! I see now. It is Mabel in her white dress! Sweet Mabel!

Little did I think, when my old chum Garton asked me to be his baby's godfather, that the child would one day come and live here to be the light of my life! I trust I have made her orphanhood a lighter burden than it might have been. How exquisitely lovely the girl is, with the sunlight kissing her brown tresses!

She catches sight of me and her charming face lights up and here she comes——!

But no! I must not let the madcap in, or good-bye to all work. So I wave her away.

\* \* \* \* \*

God help me! I have just seen the shadow again! It was lurking near the moss-rose tree at the corner of the path as Mabel passed, a few minutes ago, with a pretty pout on her lips at being refused admittance, and a playful shake of her bit of a fist at me. Could the thing have been lying in wait for her behind the bushes? It may have been my fancy, but it seemed to me to outline dimly the shape of a crouching man.

I cannot now hide from myself the conviction that the awful thing is growing more distinct each time I see it.

At first it was a mere suggestion of a shadow rather than an actual shade; something like the very faint shadow cast by a sickly sun—a mere blur.

And the crowning horror of it is that it appears to have some mysterious affinity with Mabel, for it is never visible unless she be somewhere near! May God shield the poor child from harm!

\* \* \* \* \*

What drivelling nonsense is this that I have been writing? It is unutterably absurd that a grotesque fancy should so prey on a healthy man. What would my sister Martha say? Why, I have never (till now) known what nerves are! An old University oarsman and cricketer, I should be above this morbid nonsense. Here goes for a ten-mile walk over the cliffs by the sea-side! That is the broom to brush away these cobwebs of the brain. And I'll see a doctor to-morrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

*[Dated the following day.]*

I've seen old Crake. How the dear old doctor laughed when I told him of my ailment.

"Shadow of your grandmother!" he scoffed. "Why, man alive, any fool could tell 'twas indigestion! Come now! When d'ye go to roost? What d'ye eat? How many pipes a day do you smoke?"

And he was quite triumphant over my confession of latish hours and a hearty appetite for meals and tobacco. I am

feeling better already, and am following the doctor's rules implicitly.

\* \* \* \* \*

[*Dated a month later.*]

Ah, me! My secret trouble has returned in an aggravated form, and I am powerless to battle with it.

Very gradually, but very surely, the mysterious shadow, which has drained the sunshine out of my life, is growing into substance. Even now it is, as the book of Exodus has it, "a darkness that may be felt"—so distinct are its outlines, and, I had almost said, its features. And I do not know that the word would be out of place; for now and again there surely flashes upon me out of its dusky lineaments the glance of a malevolent eye, and yesterday the gleam of teeth shone for a moment where its cruel lips were curling into a mocking sneer at some innocent remark of Mabel's.

Aye, it is ever Mabel! I never see the phantom save close to her. Horrible! Most horrible!

Yet the child is, as yet, thank Heaven, unconscious of the dread something flitting near her which causes her guardian such agony.

I strive with all my might to hide the emotion it excites, for the girl's sake. And I hope and think that no human being—not even Martha—knows my strange trial.

Like Jacob, I wrestle on a mountain-top of utter loneliness; not, like him, with a good angel to gain a blessing, but with a bad one to avert a curse. And as Jacob's dear ones peacefully rested in the valley, unwitting of his dire struggle, so, please God, my sister and my ward are now, at dead of night, sleeping a sweet and dreamless sleep, while I am agonising in the cruel grip of this nameless fear!

\* \* \* \* \*

The thrice accursed shade is beginning to use threatening gestures! Yesterday from behind Mabel's chair, it shook a clenched hand at me, and the words I was uttering froze on my lips. I forget what I was saying. I forget everything now, save this horror which I would give the world——! What was that I heard just now?

Thank God for one thing. Never yet have I seen the grim



presence hevering near Mabel in church. There only have I rest. But is not this additional proof that it is an evil spirit from the bottomless pit luring my darling to some awful——? Again that sound!

Would to Heaven that the shadow were substance! Then would I grapple with it to the death for Mabel's sake!

\* \* \* \* \*

*[Statement of Silas Chipp, gardener to the late Rev. J. Burcot and Parish Clerk of Barbar.]*

He wor allers a good measter to me, wor the Rector. A fine hup-standing gennleman as hever I seed, six foot in 'is stockin's, stronger nor Tim Blacksmith and with a pair o' shoulders like Farmer Bates! And, afore his trouble, a jolly 'earty man with a larf as wor better nor doctor's stuff to a sadly pusson! But yer knowed 'im yerself? Jess so.

When did I tek notiss of hanythink differ?

Why, 'twor on the Monday—no, Toosday, after Stillbro' Fair. That day he walked back and fore in the garden a-mutterin' to 'isself and makin' no more account o' me, has wor a-workin' 'ard by, nor if I wor a stone himage, and 'im so sot on his flowers and vegetables and sich!

Thinks I, "There's bound to be summat wrang wi' Measter."

Well, some fortnight arter, Rector, 'e cum to me one fine mornin' for to pick a place for the sallary and brokilo, and more like wot 'e use ter be nor I'd sin 'im for some time sunce.

"Silas, my man," sez 'e, quoit cheery loike, "now for a loikely spot for them brokilo," sez 'e, "for we beant a-goin' to let nobody else take the cake for brokilo this year, not if we can 'elp it."

Jess then I heerd a click o' the garden gate and in cums Miss a-singin' loike a thrush, and a sweeter young lass nor Miss Mabel yer couldn't see nowheers, and loike a darter to Rector and Miss Burcot for all she be no kin o' they, not wotever.

Measter 'e hup and looks at 'er as she cum 'long the path, and in a jiffy yer mout a-knocked me down wi' a spray of fennel, that skeered wor I.

For he wor a-peerin' o'er Miss's shoulder at summat ahint 'er, 'is eyes 'most a-startin' hout of 'is 'ead and 'is face loike the dead!

I wor that creepy that I tuk but one look, and nowt in loife could I see but a wheel-barrer, not my own self I couldn't. But Rector 'e mout 'a sin the Devil 'isself!

Howsumdever, when Miss cum hup 'e whips round and teks her by the harm so as she couldn't see 'is face, and I heerd 'em a-talking' together on their way back to the 'ouse.

But Measter 'e forgot all about them brokilo.

Nothin' hout o' the common, not has I can call to mind, 'appened after this up to a Froiday night in June.

'Twor our choir practiss. Measter, in coorse, wor there and the choir, hall save Bertie Cobb, who wor that sadly 'long o' heating green gooseberries as 'e'd 'ad to boide in bed. Bertie 'e be a reglar limb 'e be, but hour best treble, moind yer, hall the same.

I'd lit the candles in the chansull and a couple agin the wall, down in the church (wich 'e be a dark 'un, 'e be), for Miss, who use ter slip in and listen to the moosic.

Well, practiss was nigh hover when Fred Timms 'e lends I a dig i' the ribs and sez 'e in my hear at the end of a werse:

"Wot's cum to Rector?" sez 'e.

Wi' that I turns and Mrs. Babbs, the horganist (she'd heerd some choir boys a-w'isperin'), she turns, and we hall turns, and looks hat Rector. He wor a standin' nigh the haltar-rail, a-facin' to'rds the west winder, wi' that same gruesome look on him as I'd sin afore—only wuss—ten toimes wuss. It guv hus hall the cold shivers, it did! For 'e wor a-seein' summat, has none hon hus could see, somewheers close agin Miss Mabel.

Miss, she wor a-stoopin' down 'er 'ead to look hat 'er book, or mebbe drowsin' a bit, and small blame to 'er, for Chant 31 'e be a powerful soothin' 'un; and we wor glad she didn't 'appen to look hour way.

Measter, 'e looked has hif 'e'd sin his death, no less; 'is face loike the chalk, 'is lower jaw dropped, and 'is eyes—well, we dursn't look hat 'em and that's the fac'!

Has for hus, we didn't stir nor speak no more nor if we wor friz. Leastways we couldn't.

Bymeby Rector 'e cums to 'isself a bit and sez 'e, hin a strange, holler-loike voice:

"That'll do. Good night, hall! Chipp, tek this to Miss Garton."



And wi' that 'e scrubbles summat on a leaf of 'is pocket-book and sez 'e, "Don't wait," sez 'e, "I'll put hout the lights meself."

I took the note to Miss, and out she whips by the big door.

And, thinks I, "Sure has heggs, Measter he've bin and haxed 'er to do summat in th' 'ouse to get 'er hout o' the way."

Well, when I'd locked t' big door ahint me, I can tell yer I felt strongly sot on it to skedaddle loike the rest on 'em, for I'd heerd 'em, when they got outside chansull door, makin' tracks for 'ome loike rabbuts. And my 'air had stood on hend whoile Miss wor a-readin' the note, for fear I mout 'a chanced to see summat hin that werry spot.

But I couldn't aboide to leave Rector by 'isself hin that lone-some place a-seein' wisions.

So I steals round and sees the loight through the chansull winders a-gittin' weaker as 'e wor a-doutin' the candles, wun by wun.

When mebbe wun hor two were left I waited and waited:

"Wot's hup?" thinks I, "hev' 'e bin and fainted away or wot?"

So, werry gingerly, I hopens chansull door and pushes my 'cad past curtain and peeps roight hin.

There wor Measter a-kneelin' hon the haltar step and a-sobbin' quietly to 'isself. Hit med my 'eart sore to see 'im, hit did! Now and agen he wor a-mutterin' summat, a prayer 'tis loike, but I couldn't roightly 'ear.

So I cums haway and waits houtside, and arter a bit hout 'e cums and locks the door hall roight, and I hup and sez, same has hif nothing 'adn't 'appened:

"'Tis a foine night, sir, and I'm thinkin' we'd best get in that 'ere medder-'ay to-morrer."

He wor glad to see me, leastwise I thowt so, and sez 'e, quoite chirpy:

"Ye're roight, Silas," sez 'e. "Tell Farmer Bates ez 'ow we should be glad hof a lend o' the waggin, hif so be has 'e beant a-husin' on hut 'isself."

And I walks 'long hof 'im has far as Rectory door, 'im and me together, a-talkin' jess loike hold toimes, 'cept that I heerd none o' that ere jolly larf of 'isn.

No! nor never will no more, poor soul!

\* \* \* \* \*

[*Last entry in the Diary of the late Rev. J. Burcot: almost illegible*].

Friday night, June 13.

Even consecrated walls cannot keep out the accursed thing. I saw it to-night behind Mabel in church. It stole nearer and nearer her, till at length it thrust out its dusky arms towards her, like a great black spider about to clutch its prey.

\* \* \* \* \*

[*Two years later. Scene: Dr. Crake's sanctum. Time, 11 p.m. Dramatis personæ: Dr. Crake and his new partner, Mr. Jebson*].

"So," said the rosy-cheeked, white-headed doctor, filling his favourite pipe with a deliberation born of the consciousness that the next ring at the surgery-bell would be a matter for the junior partner's attention, "so, Jebson, you were like a boy in pursuit of a soapy-tailed pig. Just as you thought you had caught old Telfort and were in for a yarn—the yarn, in fact—you found him slipping away from you!"

"Yes, just like the boy, what I want is a firm grasp of the whole tail," said Jebson, whose cigar was in full glow.

"And the whole tale you shall have," chuckled the doctor, who had a way of genially annexing other people's jokes in the sincere belief that they were his own, "but first let me light up."

"Poor dear Jack Burcot!"

The doctor's rollicking voice had become tender and cooing as the note of a turtle-dove, and, as he blew meditative clouds into the air, he watched them drawing off into thin wisps with a far-off gaze.

Now Jebson, himself a man of few words, could sympathise with and respect an eloquent hiatus. So he sat still as a mouse, till the doctor was ready to proceed.

At length a belated fly lit upon the senior partner's bald pate and created a diversion.

"Where was I? I had known Burcot from his cradle. He was worth knowing. Physically, he was quite the handsomest and finest man I have ever seen; a grand athlete, a 'Varsity blue——"

"I know," said Jebson reverentially, "made big scores for

the Gentlemen v. Players and rowed two years running for Oxford."

"As a friend," the doctor went on, "he was peerless! For instance, his old schoolfellow, Garton, Rector of Pikewich, having lost his wife (it was a case of cancer), and all his property by the breaking of Cobton's bank, died, leaving a little girl who happened to have Burcot for her godfather. And a fairy godfather he was! He did all that a father could have done, and amply provided for her into the bargain. And he was not without his reward. Mabel Garton grew up into the sweetest and loveliest girl in the county, and was as the apple of his eye. Even Burcot's only sister (who is the grimmest spinster I know), was, in her stiff way, oddly fond of Mabel.

"Well, Burcot had been ten years rector of this family living, beloved by his parishioners, with ample means, and apparently superb health, in short, as happy as a mortal could be, when one day he consulted me, in a half-joking, shame-faced way, about an appearance like a shadow which vexed him.

"Of course I knew there was insanity in the family; but I had always regarded poor Jack as a splendid illustration of '*mens sana in corpore sano*.'

"I pooh-poohed, and called it indigestion, and so on, but at the end of the interview it was clear to me that the family curse had lit upon him. So it proved. He grew morbid and hippish, and finally his brain gave way. A curate was put in charge of the parish, and competent keepers were placed in the Rectory to look after poor Burcot. His sister stuck by him, and as a matter of fact there was no risk in her doing so, as his malady had taken the form of extreme despondency without the smallest tendency to violence."

Jebson shook his head.

"You can never tell," said he, "what turn a case of mental weakness may take."

The old doctor was pugnaciously argumentative, and felt all the temptation of a favourable opening, but the swing of his story was upon him, so after a wistful pause, he went on:

"His ward too would have stuck by Burcot through all. But I sent her away on the ground that her presence, much as he loved her, was, in some way or other, a source of agitation to

him. The reason why was found on examination of her guardian's papers."

Here the doctor, noting that Jebson had changed his attitude, and that every line of his face and body was shaping itself to the keenest attention, inhaled the full fragrance of the incense so dear to the teller of a story.

"It was this. To Burcot's mind there was some sinister association of the shadow he had mentioned to me with Mabel Garton. He fancied, in fact, that it dogged the girl's steps."

"Tell me one thing, Crake. Was it ever surmised that Burcot had any warmer feeling for the girl than the paternal kind of affection you have described?"

"I never heard the smallest hint of it. Not only was Burcot at that time fifty and the girl nineteen, but there never had been in the man a trace of a weakness such as that." (Dr. Crake was a bachelor.) "It was a matter of comment."

Jebson waved his cigar in token of waiving the point.

"Mabel was packed off, ostensibly on a short visit to a cousin of the Burcots in another county—a Mrs. Tanwick, who was a widow and well-to-do. Here an admirer turned up in the person of a young baronet, whom Mrs. Tanwick—an indefatigable match-maker—considered an eminently eligible candidate for Mabel's hand. I met him once, and must admit that he had remarkable personal advantages. He was as dark as a Spaniard, and his black eyes were strikingly brilliant and piercing. They had the singular quality of seeming to arrest and take hold of one's attention in so vivid a way that it was like the grasp of a hand. There was something weird and uncanny about it, and it reminded one of the Ancient Mariner. For the rest, he was a tall and athletic man of distinguished presence. But—there was an indefinable something—some subtle note which jarred."

Jebson's cigar had gone out.

"What did the young lady think of him?"

"Why, it was difficult to tell! The man clearly exercised a strong influence over her. But it was, some thought, more like the fascination of a bird by a snake than anything else. His personality seemed to dominate her in spite of herself. At last matters drifted into an engagement. The poor child certainly did not look as other maidens do in like case. She was

wretchedly pale and distraught, and her wan little face began to wear a frightened and hunted look. One day Sir Dudley Sake——”

“Ah!” said Jebson. “I felt that name was coming.”

The doctor paused and took his turn at listening.

“Why, Crake, he was a fellow-student of mine in hospital before I went to sea, and we youngsters all regarded him, and with reason, as a dangerous reptile. He used to say that he was studying anatomy and medicine, not for a living, nor for healing’s sake, but to arm himself for vengeance on his enemies. He had travelled much, and went in for charms, incantations and spiritualism. He was a cynic, and sneered at everything good and pure. This is not a handsome foot” (thrusting out a huge boot), “but I am glad to remember that it once administered a sound kicking to Sir Dudley Sake for his rudeness to a certain young lady among the hospital nurses.”

This was a long speech for Jebson. He was slightly flushed, perhaps with the unwonted exercise. His bolt being shot, he subsided into his chair with a muttered apology for his emotion.

“Go on, doctor, do.”

“Well, one day, the baronet took it into his head to make an expedition all by himself into this parish of Barbax. Possibly he wished to learn something of Mabel’s old surroundings. Heaven knows! Now, Jebson, you have been here long enough to know that part of the sea coast where the precipitous Pincost rocks tower over the bay. As you are aware, paths for the convenience of visitors wind among the cliffs.

“Now Burcot happened to be out for a walk with one of his keepers on the Pincost path, which, as it was winter time, was the most secluded in the parish, when a stranger came into sight at a turn of the path, walking briskly to meet them, some two hundred yards off. As the man drew nearer, Burcot started violently and showed signs of the strongest agitation. According to the keeper’s account he cried ‘It’s the shadow come to life!’ The man, seeing that some crisis was at hand, tried to detain his patient and guide him homewards, but Burcot dashed him to the ground and rushed madly towards the approaching figure. The keeper was, for the moment, stunned by the fall, but soon picked himself up and gave chase, arriving, however, only just in time to see the end of the encounter.

“ They were in a death-struggle on the very verge of the cliff. The stranger was a powerful man, and was fighting for his life. But Burcot’s malady had given him superhuman strength, and the awful wrestling-match was not long in doubt. In spite of his frantic struggles Burcot pushed the man over the edge, and both fell, gripping one another in a deadly clutch, forty feet before they reached the water, which was, at that point and tide, full twenty feet deep.

“ When the bodies were found, knit together in a grim embrace, that of the stranger was identified as Sir Dudley Sake’s.”

There was a long pause.

Then the doctor soliloquised aloud :

“ Yes ! This man was the shadow creeping over Mabel Garton’s life. But the question is how Burcot, who had never seen him before, came to connect him with his ghastly visions ! ”

“ That,” said Jebson, who was his dry self again, “ was the merest coincidence.”

“ But, my dear fellow,” cried the doctor, hastily mounting his hobby of argument, “ consider the circumstances——”

There was a ring at the surgery door.

“ Mrs. Boobyer took bad,” reported the doctor’s man.

R. PARPED.

Between the Dream and its Fulfilment comes  
a Pause—which we call Life.

“ FADED the Dream, I must arise ”—  
The sleeper opened happy eyes  
On swift approaching morn,  
Foretold in red of dawn,  
That flushed the whiteness of the Ivory Gates.

“ The Ivory Gates are open wide,  
But Memory still shall safely hide  
That dream which was the key,  
The subtle prophesy  
Of what the future holds to crown my days.

“ From Life I ask nor more nor less  
Than this—she should my future bless  
With the fulfilment bright  
Of that unreal delight,  
Whose promise made the gladness of my dream.

“ Beyond that Desert wide, I see—  
Luring with sweet security—  
Beyond that morning mist  
Which sun's rays never kissed,—  
I see the glad fulfilment of my dream ! ”

“Come forth,” a strong stern tone  
From the grey morn was thrown ;  
    “Why dost thou linger there ?  
    Halting ’twixt Dreams and Care,  
When once the Ivory Gates have been unbarred ?

“Dost thou not know the fatal dower,  
The birthright of the morning hour ;—  
    Peace then exchanged for strife,  
    Which is the price of Life,—  
Life, the strong Arbiter of Destiny ? ”

Outside the close-barred Ivory Gate  
The Dreamer stands,—beside him Fate,  
    Pointing with lifted hand,  
    Across the Desert sand,  
Where no oasis breaks the dreary scene.

AUTHOR OF “MISS MOLLY.”



## Till Death—and After.

### CHAPTER I.

"IT was a night in lovely June," and the dainty yacht, the *Fayre Ladye*, lay at rest for the night by the picturesque little staithe at Stalham, in Norfolk. From the adjacent broad came voices of men and women singing the lilting chorus of some popular song, which their musical talent, or the witchery of their surroundings, or the sweet, pure night atmosphere, robbed of all its vulgarity; in the pauses of the song could be heard the cuckoo calling from a belt of chestnuts; from the neighbouring reeds came the crake of the coot and the plash of the hungry pike—everywhere and over all were the silver splendour of the moon and the sweet fragrance of the new-mown hay.

On the deck of the *Fayre Ladye*, in chairs and postures eloquent of comfort, which was further testified to by the aroma of cigars and the proximity of long frosted tumblers adequately supplied, sat three men. Of these, the two elder, Bethune, an Indian barrister, surnamed Councillor, from an imaginary likeness to him of Doone, and the Hon. Bertie Furze—more familiarly Prickles—major in H.M. 25th Dragoons, had but recently returned from the gorgeous East, and determined to enjoy a peerless summer in the most delightful of all ways, had chartered the yacht, and compelled their common friend, Travers, one of the rising surgeons of the day, to take advantage of an opportunity that offered, and accompany them.

The conversation had languished; the scene was provocative of silence, and the friends were sufficiently intimate to indulge in the charm without embarrassment.

"What an evening!" presently observed Prickles with languid enthusiasm.

"And what a scene!" rejoined Travers; "one could imagine without much effort that gleam to be the pathway of the fairies, and that, in the gloom of yonder trees, were gathered misty forms, released from the grave to revisit 'the glimpses of the moon.'"

"By Jove, Dick!" ejaculated Prickles; "you'll be laureate

yet if you go on like that ; but still, I thought—though I can't say I've any actual experience—that your orthodox ghost rather affected the horrible and dismal as the scene of his appearances."

" Ah, those are the conventional ghosts of melodrama ; my *revenants* of to-night, on the other hand, would be kindly ghosts—brave warriors or wise sages returned to right the wronged, or counsel the helpless, gentle women who would fain soothe and aid——"

" If you fellows will leave off this fantasy, which rather grates on me, and come into the cabin—it's getting chilly—I'll tell you a story ; a true one, too, if that is any recommendation—bearing on what you've just said."

It was Bethune who spoke, and he turned to Travers as he uttered the last words. So brusque an interruption would probably have elicited a chaffing retort, had not his friends noticed that his face looked very grave and sad, and paler even than the moonlight warranted.

In a few minutes the trio were seated in the cosy cabin, and Travers noticed with surprise—though, after another glance at his friend's white face, with professional approval—that Bethune, invariably an excessively abstemious man, poured himself out a somewhat stiff tumbler.

" As, according to Prickles, you're a poet, Dick," said Bethune, as the colour returned to his cheeks, and the look of sadness passed away, " you will doubtless remember what one of your predecessors on Parnassus said about ' a word at random spoken.' Your last contribution to the ideal, that reference to spirit visitants around us, recalled vividly and painfully to my mind an experience of my own—an experience strange and sad beyond all thought or dreaming, and yet one which, please God, I shall never forget."

Six years ago I had just overcome the *vis inertiae* which is so singularly strong at the bar, and was beginning to find myself busy. That year I went to Sudabad for part of my holiday, and there I met the Adairs—you remember, Bob Adair, Prickles, he was in yours for some months after you joined ? They had gone there originally for the health of Edith, the only daughter, but this, when I arrived, was considered to be quite restored. I'm not going to try to describe her to you : she was

pretty—ah, how pretty! and—she was Edith Adair, which to me meant all of good and beautiful that earth can show in a woman. One hears this sort of thing laughed at, but I can honestly say that from the first hour I saw her she was everything to me—my future was bound up in her; I had no thought or plan or hope in which she was not the chief part: of life without her I could form no idea—nor did I try to. And yet—I never told her. My acquaintance was too recent; besides, she was to me so emphatically “a being enskied, ensainted,” so immeasurably above me, that I dreaded—it seemed almost profanation—to seek to ally her with myself. I would wait, I thought, and strive the while to raise myself nearer to her. And she? Oh, she *liked* me from the first, was frank and friendly and affectionate to me, and in my blindness I marvelled at my wondrous good fortune, thinking that this meant love. Sometimes I have wished I had spoken; it might have been better, but I do not know: when we meet I will ask her.”

The speaker's voice had sunk very low, and the last words were spoken in the dreamy meditative tone of one who thinks aloud. His listeners glanced at each other; they began to realize that the “experience” they were to hear, was one where a man's heart had been the stake between love and death—that it told of the hidden things of life, weird, solemn riddles, given us to guess at here, and whereof the answer will be made plain elsewhere.

After a moment's pause Bethune gave himself that sort of shake and start with which we plunge back into real life from those

“ Dreamful wastes where footless fancies dwell ”

and resumed his story.

One day I was with the Adairs when the post came. There was a letter from Bob, and as the old man read it he gave a pleased chuckle, and glanced meaningly at Edith.

“ Here is a message for you, little lady. ‘Tell Edie that I met Wilders the other day, and I shouldn't wonder if you see him your way soon.’ I suppose we must make him welcome, but I'm sure I can't imagine what brings him.”

I glanced at Edith ; there was a bright blush on her face, and her eyes were bent down, but I fancied that had my glance been a moment earlier, I should have found them looking at me. Of course the incident alarmed me, but I tried to think that the flush was only natural at her father's meaning banter, and might not have the significance I feared. Be that as it might—that day I would know my fate. I was rather glad that an appointment would take me away for some hours ; the question meant so much to me, I must needs think and prepare myself.

It was evening when I returned—something such an evening as this, allowing for difference in clime. I was later than I expected, but none the less was I resolved to “ put my fortune to the touch,” and leaving my horse tethered to some palings, took a little path through a shrubbery to the house. I can recall in memory every moment of that walk—the stillness of the night, the unusual lustre of the stars, the intense, overwhelming sweetness of the Eastern shrubs. What is it one of you poets says, Travers :

“ I shall never be friends again with roses.”

Since that day there are some scents I would walk miles to avoid, scents which seem to smite with actual pain. The pathway came out just under the verandah ; as I neared the end the light from the room within gleamed on the dark shiny foliage of the oleander ; within a few minutes, I thought to myself, while my heart throbbed almost audibly with hope and excitement, I should be pleading my love face to face, heart to heart with her, and I should know my fate. Ah me ! I knew it in less time than that, and the boisterous, eager, foolish heart ceased its mad pulsations and stood still, to resume its dreary toil, its life sentence, listlessly and mechanically, as works a prisoner without hope—save in the Great Gaol Delivery. For in that lighted room, where I had pictured myself pleading for and winning a sweeter boon than life, stood Edith, my one love, clasped in the arms of the handsomest man I had ever seen, and looking up at him with a light in her sweet eyes that I had never seen, for it had never shone for me.

Sometimes one is half inclined to ridicule the idea of being by some shock struck motionless ; you fellows may take my

word for it, it is possible enough. I stood paralysed, petrified ; only ear and eye were roused into painful activity. Presently Wilders—for I felt sure it was he—stooped and kissed her forehead and lips, and then leaning a little back, held her head in his two hands and gazed down into the tender depths of those glowing, trusting eyes, and, finding there what he sought, drew her to him again and whispered something I could not catch.

“How glad they will all be,” he said, after a while, “unless indeed, your friend the barrister—what is his name?—is *épris*. I don't quite see how he could help it, and if so, I'm afraid he will scarcely share in the rejoicings.”

The voice was wonderfully musical, the words not unkind ; there was no suspicion of mockery, and yet, somehow, something rang false. There seemed a lightness, a want of depth, which gave me pain—not for myself, oh, not for myself. The “myself” I had known hitherto was dead.

“Oh, no, Harry, darling, I don't think that for a moment. I'm sure Mr. Bethune likes me ; I like him as we all do ; he is the sort of man who could be such a loyal friend, a friend one could trust to the uttermost in any trouble, but I don't think any one has ever thought of me in—in that way but you, and I'm sure I never——”

The rest of the sentence was prevented, *more amantium*, and a few minutes later the two left the room. I crept back again by the shrubbery path—how different it seemed ! and rode off to the bungalow of a friend, some few miles distant, where I had a standing invitation.

Most fortunately he was away ; I was scarcely in the mood for society, and I dispatched a syce to the Adairs, making some apology for my absence. I nerved myself the following day to go over, and hear with calm face and conventional felicitations the news of Edith's engagement ; I nerved myself even to go a few weeks later to the wedding. I think that somehow she had guessed my secret : when I bade her good-bye there was such a look of pitying affection in her eyes, such a message of consolation conveyed, I fancied, in the low faltering voice with which she said, “I shall always look upon you, Mr. Bethune, as one of our dearest friends,” that my stoicism well nigh gave way. However, I thanked her in tones which I think were steady,



and, as I bade God bless her, told her I prayed she might never need her friends' help, but that if she ever did, none would serve her more loyally or—the words escaped unwittingly—with a better right. She caught the words and blushed ; then, knowing that her welfare was dear beyond words to me, whispered "I am very happy," gave me a parting look of trust and sisterly love, and went away with her husband to begin the life journey together.

Bethune paused in his narration, and commenced with exaggerated concentration of purpose to fill his pipe ; Travers, with a glance at the pale, set face, refilled his friend's glass, with the plausible suggestion that "talking was dry work." Prickles sat quiet, save for one sudden movement quickly suppressed, as though he would like to put his hand in the old boy-like token of sympathy on the barrister's shoulder. I do not think that either of these actions or the feelings which prompted them were unnoticed by the latter.

"They came home to England," resumed Bethune, "and while they were here the old people died. When they went back two years later, I heard that Wilders had got a superintendent's berth at a place called Troona, right up country, miles away from everywhere. Soon after that I met Bob Adair, and from what he said I felt sure things were going badly. Poor old Bob ! three months after that he was killed in a row with some hill tribes—I have often thought how much he was spared—and Edith Wilders was left without any relatives of her own in India. After what he had told me, I had tried to find out more particulars about the Wilders' *ménage* ; the position was a difficult and delicate one, but I was fully determined to intervene if circumstances seemed to call for it. What I learnt was terribly disquieting. Wilders, it seemed, was giving way to drink—an old failing of his, it now transpired ; the station was fearfully lonely, a misanthropic chaplain, a doctor, and a Mrs. Vereker being practically the only society. And this was one too many, for people said that Wilders was neglecting his wife and becoming entangled with the fascinating widow. It was difficult to know what to do ; for me to interfere would give a terrible opening for scandal ; perhaps I had better do nothing—

troubles of this sort often settle themselves, and yet—my tidings were some weeks old, and to what lengths might not a weak drunkard, infatuated with a guilty passion for an unscrupulous beautiful woman, have gone by now? I determined to write to my sister who was at Cairo for her health, to ask her to pay me a visit. With her to give countenance, any action would be facilitated. As I sat down to write, a letter was put into my hands ; it was from Edith.

“Do you remember your promise? I am ill and in trouble ; will you come to me?”

The letter was dated four days back. That night saw me speeding towards Troona as fast as rail and boat could take me, and ever before my eyes was the vision of my lost love, holding out her dear hands to me for succour, and ever in my ears wailed the hideous warning “Too late ! Too late !”



## CHAPTER II.

I HAD purposed to stay at Jungal one night ; the next day I should be able to reach Troona. Though I had been travelling without a break for fifty hours I could not bring myself to go to bed, so sat up in my room and tried to busy myself in an intricate case I had brought with me. It was a vain endeavour ; dismal foreboding strove with memory which should be the more active in my mind. I recalled the day I first met Edith, every occasion on which I saw her, well nigh every word she had spoken and every expression I had ever seen upon her face. How well I remembered that wedding, and how the sweet voice rose a little in its holy earnestness at the words “Till death us do part.” The words rang in my ears, and with them those I had heard her speak concerning myself as one whom she could “trust to the uttermost,” and sound and sense of each utterance made together a sad strange harmony—such a harmony as the tone of a passing bell might make with the love-attuned music of a maiden’s laugh. I rose from the table and walking to the window, gazed out into the tranquil, lustrous night, but its very beauty and tranquillity jarred on me ; I longed for the morrow.

I turned back to the table resolved once more to seek an anodyne in dry, hard work. Before me, by the chair where I had been sitting, *stood Edith*, pale, worn and sad, beautiful beyond words, though with a beauty I had never seen and at which my heart trembled and grew cold—stretching her hands to me for help as I had pictured her doing, and with her eyes full of trouble and prayer and trust. No sound came from her lips, yet she spoke to me, and told me—oh, my God!—told me what my own wretched heart had been telling me with every beat it gave, that she was dead—and *dead at her husband's hand*.

I suppose I fainted, for the next thing that I remember was finding myself on my knees by the chair and the sun streaming into the room. A loud knock was heard at the door; as I rose to my feet to open it, I noticed on the blotting pad a piece of paper with some writing on it, which I did not remember to have seen the night before. A renewal of the knocking called me to the door; it was the landlord to tell me that I ought to be ready to start in an hour, and that an ayah had been enquiring for me. The man had brought some tea and as he placed it on the table, he moved the paper I have mentioned. "Give me that paper," I said, "that you've just moved," and then as he seemed in doubt, added "that with the writing on," and passed into my dressing-room. He brought me, I should say, every paper on the table except the right; impatiently I went myself, took up the sheet and held it to him. "Where are your eyes, man! This is the one I meant." The man stared blankly at me: "I thought you said with writing, sir?" I was about to make some angry rejoinder when by chance I looked at the paper, and the words died away on my tongue. It was Edith's writing; in some mysterious way her spirit had left it for me, but the moment I looked at it something within told me that it was visible to no eye besides mine. I made some plausible excuse about the mistake being mine and turned away, the precious paper trembling in my hand, and the weird vision of the night recurring with intense vividness to my memory.

"I knew you would come," ran the note, "for I knew your heart always—and so thoroughly *now*. We shall not meet here and yet, you know why. But dear, loyal friend, I still need your help, not for myself, but for him, my husband, the man I have



loved so dearly. He must be saved from the consequences of what he has done. Many things are very clear to me now, and I know that it was not his real self who did this dreadful thing, and who for months past has been changed and cruel to me. I know, too, that no ill will result from your doing what I ask; *his* time is very near. You will discover the means and I shall help you. He is in sore misery, and has no friend and many enemies, and the wife who swore to love and cherish him must help him now, and none the less that his trouble and danger is of his own causing. Let not the charge grieve you, dear friend; you will, I know, not reckon pain, in your love for me, and I could never have begged your aid so earnestly for myself as I do for him. God will bless you, and He will let me thank you when we meet."

Every word was plain to me, save for the hot blinding tears that filled my eyes, and yet I knew—explain it who can—that the paper was blank.

Another knock at the door was followed by my host's voice announcing that he had brought up "the woman," whom I had forgotten. But now, as I held Edith's letter in my hand, I felt the conviction that her arrival was in some way connected with the tragedy I had been so strangely made aware of. I bade him show her in, and glanced again at the letter in my hand—nay, more, I pressed it to my lips again and again, and vowed that, God helping me, I would do my utmost to obey her dear behest, at whatever cost, even though it was to shield her murderer.

The door opened and Roberts in true insular style announced Miss Saba. She was in native costume, and her face was comely, though now livid and haggard with grief.

As she approached she caught sight of the letter, and to my intense surprise exclaimed:

"Ah, the sahib knows, then?" She, too, then could recognise the dead girl's writing, on a blank sheet where no writing was!

In another hour we were travelling together to Troona, and I was hearing with tearless misery and bitter rage the story of my love's sad life and awful death. I will tell it you shortly, not only as I learnt it from Saba, but with the additional details which investigation brought to light.

Wilders, it seems, had taken offence at the offer of the post at Troona, though he was unable to decline it. He had let the grievance rankle, had become morose and sulky, and had renewed his fatal propensity for drink. His whole nature seemed to change; he grew cold and indifferent towards his wife—later, after he had formed the acquaintance of Mrs. Vereker, bitter and openly neglectful. His infatuation for the latter was almost incredible; he neglected his home and official duties, angrily resented the most well-meant and gentle remonstrances, and, at last, threw to the winds all restraint and reck of appearances. Undoubtedly a singularly beautiful woman was Mrs. Vereker, and to her beauty she added the charm of that dreamy, sensuous seductiveness one always associates with the voluptuous languor of the Southern States. She accepted Wilders' devotion, returned—or feigned to return—his passion, but always refused to outstep the border line of propriety. "You are a married man, *mon ami*," she would say; "if you were free *cela serait une autre affaire*, perhaps I, too, might then—" And this was ever the burden of her answers; with all the alluring wiles of a Phryne, and the ardent passions of a Faustine, prudence and cunning made her as circumspect as a vestal virgin.

At last came a day when, pale and passion-worn, his eyes ablaze with an unholy light, and his wondrous beauty instinct with the hateful radiance of a fallen angel, Wilders bade his enchantress farewell at an earlier hour than usual. His words were confused and inconsequent, his manner excited, exhibiting sudden alternations of wild hilarity and profound melancholy. Mrs. Vereker was puzzled; it was not all drink this time. "He was going away," he said, "for two or three days. His wife—" the gleaming eyes narrowed for a moment and seemed to lose their light—"seemed ailing; it was a foolish fancy, but would she promise that if—" and the hideous compact was made with hypocritical reluctance and self-reproach, and affected make-believe that it was all a piece of harmless folly. And with this woman's burning kisses on his lips and brow, Harry Wilders went forth, and sky and earth grew dim before his eyes, hidden by a red mist which wreathed and shaped itself into the figure of a dead woman with pale face and staring eyes—a face which had once glowed beneath his kisses, eyes which had gazed into

his with a holy light, and had brightened and filled with happy tears, when, on that very day two years ago, he had whispered in her ear her new, sweet name of "wife."

That evening all Edith's servants were told by their master that he had suddenly lent the bungalow to a friend who had arrived unexpectedly and would bring his own establishment—not so unusual an occurrence there as here—and that they were accordingly discharged with a solatium. Saba Wilders sent to engage rooms for her mistress and himself—who would, he said, follow in a few hours—in an hotel at a hill station some miles distant.

Husband and wife were alone in the once happy home, round which so many hopes and plans had clustered, and whose every room had its own association with the old sweet life so full of promise. But to Wilders there came no voice of ruth, no tender piteous vision from the past. He could see nothing but the dark lustrous eyes of his Circe, feel nought but her impassioned kisses and hear the voluptuous promise of her broken words. The night fell, the buggy in which he had said he should drive his wife over stood ready at the gate. A light gleamed in one room; suddenly it was extinguished, and then came a gurgling, muffled cry, "Harry—Harry, my husband! God for—" And then silence—such a silence! and presently a shaking, ghastly figure staggered from the door and into the carriage, and drove madly away.

There was silence in the little cabin as Bethune paused. His voice had grown strained and deep, and had faltered as he repeated the dying words of the murdered girl. The night was passing away and was indeed "almost at odds with morning;" but neither speaker nor listeners dreamed of cutting short the story that was being told.

What follows, resumed Bethune, will be easier for me to tell than what has gone before, but perhaps you will not find it so easy to believe. And yet what I tell you I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears. I must now give a few dates. It was on the 14th of June that Saba had been sent from Troona, and as she was leaving the house Wilders had told her not to be uneasy if they did not come till latish

the following day, as they might possibly pay a visit to some neighbours. But when six o'clock in the afternoon of the 15th came and no sign of her master and mistress, she began to be anxious. She walked a little way along the road by which they would come, when suddenly she distinctly heard her mistress' voice say, "Come back to Troona, Saba." Unsceptical—credulous, if you will, as are all her nation with regard to the supernatural, the woman hesitated not for a moment, but forthwith commenced the homeward journey. She reached the house about ten o'clock; all was in darkness; the expected family had evidently not arrived. Surely the house was empty, and yet again she heard the call in faint low tones, "Saba, come." She found a door open and entered. The moon streaming in through the windows made progress inside the house easy. She made her way to her mistress' room, and paused sick and faint, for the gentle call had ceased, and something within her told that on the other side of the door was horror and crime and the awful mystery of Death. What, too, if there were something else, more awful and mysterious than the grisly horror itself, because no longer subject to him! The pause was only for a moment; all the love of the woman's nature had been given to the kind, gentle English lady, and Saba opened the door and entered. The moon shone in full at the window, making the room light as day. In a heap across the bed lay the body of Edith Wilders, half undressed, shot through the heart, and her life blood showing in the moonlight a black patch upon the sheet. Some paces behind her on the floor lay a revolver.

Why Saba acted as she did it is impossible to say, except on the hypothesis that she was subject to another influence. She closed and locked the doors of the room and of the house, contrived in some way to obtain a conveyance and came to see me at Jungal. She might have known, and probably did, that Edith had written to me, but how she could have been aware of my exact whereabouts on that night I know not, nor could she tell me. That an Intelligence not hers was acting upon her I had been convinced from her recognition of the letter I had so strangely received.

We arrived at Troona at mid-day and reached the house unperceived. I will leave you to imagine for yourselves my

feelings as I stood in the chamber of death and gazed down at the murdered body of her who had been so dear to me, so very dear to me. . . . Saba had given the details accurately enough, only I was struck by the purity—almost the fragrance—of the atmosphere. A wild hope crossed my mind for a moment that perhaps the wound after all was not fatal. Ah, me! one moment's closer glance revealed the hideous truth. I ascertained from the ayah the address of the doctor, and hurried off to bring him. He had been suddenly called away, but Marshall, a medical friend who had come to take his place, was at my service and accompanied me back to the house. I had urged upon Saba to leave everything untouched, and a glance round the room satisfied me that she had obeyed; even the pistol lay on the floor where I had first noticed it. All three of us approached the bed.

"Terrible, terrible!" muttered the kind-hearted medico; "instant death—that's one mercy—no suffering. Poor thing—poor thing!" He touched the slightly-draped figure with that gentle reverence one associates with the profession. "H'm! pistol and close quarters. Where is it?" Saba and I turned round simultaneously to point to it. *The pistol was no longer there*, and the doctor's voice was saying in our bewildered ears, "Ah! here it is just at the foot of the bed—let's see! yes, just where it would have fallen if—" and he shook his head sadly, and repeated in mournful, reproachful tones—"Poor thing, poor thing!"

Whether he would have said anything on the opinion he had evidently formed I know not, for at that moment came the sound of voices from outside; there was a quick, sharp rap at the door, and two or three officers, and a man whom I knew by sight as a magistrate entered the room. It was startling news they brought.

Captain Wilders had been arrested that morning for the murder of his wife on the information of a discharged servant who had hung about the house, heard the cry and the shot, and seen Wilders commence his frantic flight.

I must hurry on; the task has been well nigh too heavy for me. In due course, Harry Wilders was put on his trial for the murder. I, in obedience to Edith's wish, undertook his defence, but he declined to see me, and intended, I was told, to plead



guilty. The court was crowded, and it very soon became evident that the feeling was high against my client. Certainly I have never known a blacker case. There was the evidence of the man who heard the cry and the shot, there were the extravagant and suspicious proceedings of Wilders himself before the murder, and I had ascertained that the prosecution by a little gentle pressure and an inconvenient acquaintance with her past, had compelled the *soi-disant* "Mrs." Vereker to give evidence—doubtless "with advantages"—of that last damning interview she had had with Wilders. Against all this the only point we could raise was the doctor's opinion on finding the pistol, and I shuddered as I surmised *whose* hand had moved it. I should have to make the best I could of "alcoholic insanity," and as I glanced at the jury I realized that my "best" would prove of very little avail. As I arranged my papers I remembered the letter, and taking it from my pocket, looked at it. One sentence stood out in emphatic clearness—"I shall help you," and as I read the words there came to me a sense of assurance and self-command. Something told me I should have need enough of the latter qualification.

The prisoner was brought in. What a change! Merciful Heaven, what a change! If ever a man's face portrayed infinite woe and self-reproach, it was the face of the man in the dock. There was no fear or care for self, only the pitiful misery of remorse and the agony of remembrance. And yet withal there came sometimes a strange lighting of the haggard eyes, and an awed yet loving look of expectancy.

"Prisoner at the bar, are you guilty or not guilty?"

The hush in the court was intense, as all ears were strained to catch the answer.

"G——" And then, then, before the fatal word could be uttered, I saw, plainly as I now see you before me, that another figure stood beside Wilders in the dock—a gentle woman's figure, and the kind face bent towards the wretched man and seemed to whisper to him:

"Not guilty."

On the countenances of the spectators were depicted surprise, incredulity, disgust; on the prisoner's the strange light had deepened, and he drew his hand across his eyes to which tears not wholly bitter had sprung.

The trial proceeded. The native servant, with another who could corroborate some of the facts, seemed frightened and ill at ease, but their main evidence was unshaken, and the extraordinary clearance of the house on a ridiculously lame pretext was easily proved. Then Zoe Vereker was called, and as this bid fair to be a "sensational incident," a sort of rustle of excitement ran round the court. The first formal questions were followed by one as to the frequency of the prisoner's visits. Contrary to what had been expected, the witness rather minimised this. The prosecuting counsel bit his lip and looked warningly at the witness.

"When did you last receive a visit from the prisoner?"

The answer came in low, agitated tones.

"About two o'clock in the afternoon of the 14th of June."

"What did you gather was the object of his coming?"

I had never known Anstruther to bungle so. The query enabled the witness to stave off the incriminating admission, and to give a fictitious suggestion of propriety.

"I assumed it was to bid me good-bye, as he said he was going away for a few days."

"I will put the question plainer. Was anything said by the prisoner about your marrying him if he were free?"

I rose to object, more from professional instinct than from any real hope. But before I had finished speaking, exclamations of alarm in the court made me look round. All eyes were bent upon the witness, who was leaning back as if turned to stone, a ghastly pallor overspreading her face, foam gathering round the parted lips, and her eyes fixed in a horrible glare on the space by the witness-box, where, invisible to all but her and me, stood the wraith of Edith Wilders, threatening, pitiless, with shadowy hand outstretched till it touched the other's mouth.

There was a shriek and a gurgling cry, and Zoe Vereker fell back in the convulsions of an epileptic fit.

This abortive witness closed the case for the prosecution, and I was rising to begin my hopeless task when a telegram was handed to me. It was from the doctor at Troona, who, you remember, was absent when I first saw the body. It was to this effect—"Can give most important evidence for defence—am coming on." From the place of sending I judged that he would be here in another hour, and I obtained an adjournment for that

time. When we returned into court I had seen Dr. Ayres, and knew that Wilders was saved ; and as I thought *how* he was saved, I bowed my head in reverent awe at the fathomless mystery of Being, and at this love of a woman stronger than death and pardoning to the uttermost. After a very few sentences I called Dr. Ayres.

"You are a medical man practising at Troona?"

"Yes."

"Were you well acquainted with the deceased?"

"Perfectly."

"Please tell the Court when you saw her last."

"*On the morning of the 15th of June.*"

The conventional simile of a bombshell is feeble to express the effect this answer had.

"You are perfectly clear about the date?"

"Perfectly. I made an entry in my patients' book at the time. Besides, my nephew, who also saw her, had only arrived that morning to accompany me to Cairo."

"Is your nephew in court?"

"He is."

Should I ask more? This evidence exculpated Wilders, whose absence from Troona on the 15th had been incidentally proved by the prosecution. What would *she* wish? The answer came to me in low sweet tones, and I understood that no chance must be left whereby some innocent person might be accused of her husband's crime.

"Was her visit a professional one?"

"Yes ; she seemed very pale and strange. I remarked at the time she would not shake hands, nor let me feel her pulse. As I was in a hurry, I asked her to call and see my locum tenens, who would be there in a couple of hours. She said she would, and added she should ask him for a medicine I had before prescribed for cephalalgia—headache. As she was going she noticed the calendar on the wall, and made some remark about the weather in connection with the date."

The doctor's nephew corroborated his evidence as to the visit of Mrs. Wilders. Neither made any deviation in cross-examination, and the jury stopped the case. Harry Wilders stepped from the dock a free man, but none of all the crowded court approached to offer him congratulations or give him friendly greeting. Ah,



yes ! there was *one*—the same gentle figure that had whispered to him before, and which now seemed to support him and speak soft words of comfort. As they passed out she turned round and looked at me. Such a look !—of love and gratitude and ineffable promise. I pray that in my last hour I may see that look ; I know full well I shall see it afterwards.

That night the body of Harry Wilders was found, quite dead, prone on the grave of his murdered wife. It was no suicide ; the wretched, loving, guilty, repentant heart had ceased to beat. I think sometimes that Edith's love had been permitted to give him this last boon. His face had lost something of its misery when they found him, and it was remarked that the hand which had fallen over the head-stone had rested on the word "mercy."

As I left the court I was joined by Ayres. He was very grave, and walked by my side for a time in silence.

"Bethune," at last he said, and there was an unwonted tremor in his voice, "the corpse that you and Marshall saw on the 16th had been dead for more than twenty-four hours."

I bowed my head in assent ; there could be no possible doubt on the subject.

"Then who—*what* was it that came to me the day before ?"

And I answered : "It was the spirit of a woman, who loved, and was loyal and true till death—and after."

WALTER RICHARDS.

## Restored to Life.

IN surroundings which were almost fairy like, and in a subdued light cast from amber lamps shaded with coloured canopies, the little company of three, who had before them choicest wines and most delicious fruits, should have talked of poetry or love, to make the scene complete.

The sage old man, whose hoary locks spoke of many years of life, and whose refined features and courtly manners gave evidence of a life of luxurious indulgence, should have been speaking of the beauties of Plato's thoughts, or the magnificence of Tennyson's inspired conceptions, rather than of weird ideas and recondite studies, that made the very soul to quake and the blood to run chill.

The handsome and gallant Doctor, with twenty years' knowledge of fashionable life, since taking his degree, should have been whispering soft nothings to his hostess, in the intervals of an æsthetic conversation, instead of seconding the grey beard philosopher, and encouraging him to utter his terrible theories, that savoured of heresy and necromancy.

And, most of all, the woman of surpassing beauty, who was entertaining these two guests, in her beautifully-arranged home, should have been more interested to listen to fashionable gossip, and the customary nonentities of the boudoir and the drawing-room, than to these ghostly and terrible theories and mis-shapen beliefs. And, yet, she was as absorbed in the conversation as either of her guests.

Gerard Delancey, the benevolent-faced, white-bearded old gentleman, whom some termed enthusiast, some named empiric, and others pronounced absolutely mad, was speaking.

"Now listen. The body is no more dead when the last breath is drawn, and vitality has apparently ceased to exist, than is yon small terrier of Lady Carwardine's, that is sleeping so comfortably upon its rug."

The hostess appeared to have her interest augmented

by the sage's emphatic utterance ; but she made no response, nor did Doctor Waite, who however, sent a ripple of light laughter floating out upon the perfumed and chromatised atmosphere.

"Laugh," exclaimed the old man, with bitter irony, "but do not forget that a little learning is a dangerous thing."

"Well," returned Doctor Waite, with some irritation, which he was careful to conceal, "I am aware that I have only a little learning . . . . It has enabled me, however, to pass all my tests before the medical examiners, to call myself Doctor of Medicine, and it has procured for me the right to put the letters F.R.S. after my name ; to say nothing . . . ."

"Spare us a catalogue of your evidences of genius," interrupted Delancey, smiling with provoking sweetness, "for you have already convicted yourself of your ignorance. I do not deny, and never have denied, that you are admirably qualified to acquire what is put to you in text books, like a host of others, perhaps not quite so eminent, but as to practical application after acute observation ; no no, dear boy, you fail there."

There had been evidences of harshness in the old man's voice, but he mollified his manner the next moment, as he turned to Lady Carwardine, a winning smile lightening up his symmetrical features.

"Pardon me," he said, "but you know how easily I am aggravated, and permit my fervid ideas to carry me away. Doctor Waite is really very shallow in some of his ideas, notwithstanding the distinction of his position, professionally and in the learned societies."

Then all three laughed genially, for there was nothing of ill nature in the badinage.

"Of course, I confess my ignorance," said Doctor Waite, gently. "I would confess anything to gratify our dear old friend, else he would twit me with my youth, forgetting that we cannot all be a thousand years old. Youth of forty-five as I am, of course, I am ignorant ! I confess it, without shame. But, come, venerable sage, honour us by explaining what is the occult meaning hidden behind your always courteous utterances."

Delancey paid but the faintest attention to the Doctor's remark, tintured, as it was, with a spice of sarcasm. He seemed,

indeed, to have dropped into reverie, from which he woke in a moment ; when, turning to Lady Carwardine, he said, as he held his glass so that the modified rays of light might filter through the wine and play round the glistening crystal :

“ I always think this old Marcobrunner of yours is absolute perfection ; the finest wine I ever tasted in my life ; mellow in tone, and full of the virtues of extreme age.”

The smile, whose witchery had been experienced by many a one, came over Lady Carwardine’s beautifully-chiselled face, and the infection of laughter spread to the others. For a few moments, the conversation was changed, but it speedily flowed back into its former channel.

“ It is a pity to exchange the amenities of scientific conversation,” said Waite, “ for a mere criticism of vinous products, or the meaningless babble of that polite world to which the Professor and myself sometimes seem to lose claim by our brusqueries. But, Mr. Delancey, you have not yet favoured us with any light upon that abstruse remark of yours regarding the cessation of animal functions, which is generally known as death.”

With the brightest of smiles, the Professor turned to the Doctor. “ What is there to explain ? ” he asked quietly. “ My theory is simple enough, even to those not of the medical profession. Listen. When life apparently ceases, what remains ? ”

“ A corpse,” answered Waite, curtly, while Lady Carwardine shuddered.

“ Yes,” returned Delancey, with bitter emphasis, “ to you medical ignoramuses, drilled in the school of learned asses ; your minds warped and dwarfed by traditional training ; your ideas kept in abeyance by the College of Physicians and your own inability to perceive ; to you, remains nothing but a corpse. A dull cold mass of clay. . . . But, tell me, when you blow out your candle, what happens ? ”

“ Darkness,” answered Waite, in the same terse manner as before.

“ The most intelligent answer I have ever succeeded in extracting from you,” cried Delancey, in triumph. “ I fully expected to have elicited some scientific jargon from you, as useful and translatable as the sounding brass and tinkling

cymbal given to us as similes of meaningless chatter. Truly, darkness remains until the candle can be relit."

"We all know the candle is capable of re-ignition, because there is something left to burn," said Waite, somewhat irritated by the philosopher's tone. "But how about the corpse? Life is not a mere feeble light flickering about a wick, liable to extinguishment at every chance puff of wind."

"Nay, that is just where you are wrong," interposed Delancey, with the remarkable quietude of manner that was a distinguishing characteristic. "The two things are almost absolutely identical. So long as wick and grease are unconsumed, the candle can be relit. So long as life remains in the corpse, it can be resuscitated."

"Which amounts to a truism," said the Doctor, mildly, sipping the wine the Professor had pronounced so supreme. "But this is verging on the ridiculous. Is it the intention of your argument to prove that the dead flesh and bone is cognate with the tallow and scrap of twisted cotton, and that the light which set the candle burning again, will equally restore life to the inanimate clay?"

"For once," answered Delacney, exchanging a keen glance with Lady Carwardine, "your stunted intellect is hovering very near the idea I have been endeavouring to convey to you. You were not scientifically correct in stating that, with the departure of the last breath, only a corpse remains. You are equally incorrect in saying that life can be restored to a dead person by the mere application of a match."

"A lighted match, Professor," interjected Waite, with more levity than Delancey appreciated.

"I understood you," returned the old man, with a courteous wave of the hand; "the candle is not dead when the light is extinguished. The body is not dead when you think life is extinguished."

"Think!" repeated Waite, his tone implying that his own conviction was absolute. "I had always imagined that a doctor knew."

"Many imaginings lead the impetuous astray. Philosophers learn to know."

"But I venture to say that we *do* know," exclaimed Waite, confidently.

“‘We,’” repeated Delancey, with the air of one seeking for knowledge and revelation. “And, pray, who are ‘we’? . . . Your College of Physicians? . . . Your Royal Society? . . . Your preachers, and lecturers, and pretenders and humbugs? . . . You are led by them and blinded by them. Have the courage and originality to try research.”

Waite laughed shortly, somewhat irritated by the old philosopher’s tone.

“Perhaps I have,” he said.

“But so far without any tangible result,” said Delancey solemnly. “Listen to what I have to tell you. I say that when the breath is out of the body life is not extinct. Contrary to scholasticism, but nevertheless scientifically accurate, as I can and have proved.”

Waite turned to Lady Carwardine, who had been listening intently, and with a sceptical smile, said—

“Now we are about to receive the grand revelation, Lady Carwardine. Be prepared to be astonished, for the Professor is about to unburden a gigantic mind, heavy with the vastness of the wondrous secrets that have baffled ages of careful scrutiny and painful research, only to be withdrawn from mystery by him. He will reveal what has been confided to him when, a recluse, he has known no other companions than the study, the laboratory, the crucible, the furnace, the retort—all the toys that deluded the old alchemists and those fatuous students, who imagined there was possibility of a philosopher’s stone.”

The old man regarded the doctor’s face for a single moment, before, with unruffled brow, he gave his reply.

“The Professor is going to teach you the rudiments of your profession, which, in your vast field of scientific acquirement, you appear somehow to have overlooked . . . Are you not aware that after physical life is extinct, organic life remains?”

“For a certain limited period and to some extent, possibly,” answered Waite, with little relish for the admission which was forced from him.

“Witness the growing of the hair and nails after death, or what you consider to be death. I presume you will not deny these things?”

“Certainly not; they are well enough authenticated. Nobody would dispute them, I take it.”



"Very well, then," said Delancey, with the quiet conviction of a man repeating a fact incapable of being controverted, "it is admitted, I say, that so long as organic life remains, the physical life—or what ecclesiasticism terms the soul—can be recalled."

There was something very like a sneer upon the doctor's lips, high as was the estimation in which he held the mystic, as he answered—

"Not within the range of knowledge of that learned body you so much contemn—the College of Physicians."

"Of that I am amply aware," said Delancey, quietly, "but they are neither infallible nor almighty. As a matter of fact, I know the means by which it *can* be done."

The doctor laughed outright, whereupon the old philosopher bowed with simple courtesy, absolutely unruffled by the rudeness.

"I thought that was what we were coming to," said Waite, somewhat brusquely. "Lady Carwardine, Professor Delancey has been rewarded, many rungs up the ladder of a life spent in laborious research, by the same discovery as many of his predecessors have fallen upon, nothing more nor less than the *elixir vitæ*."

"Nay," said Delancey, shaking his head in deprecation of an idea to which he could not accord adhesion, "it may amuse you so to call it, but it is entirely different. However, it makes no difference whether you term it the golden essence, the elixir of life, or the most recent pill. There it is, and so surely as acid added to alkali will produce effervescence, so certainly will this simple preparation restore animation where suspension has taken place. It may appear new, but anæsthetics were undiscovered but a few decades since, and this is no more remarkable in its action."

Waite pondered the Professor's communication gravely for a moment; then he smiled again.

"And this you positively affirm," he said. Then he turned to the hostess, who, remaining silent, had yet been deeply interested—"You hear him, Lady Carwardine?"

"I hear him, and I listen with respect to one of the most learned men of the day," Lady Carwardine answered.

Delancey bowed with his accustomed stately courtesy, in

acknowledgment of the compliment; then, turning to the doctor, he gave his assent.

"Unequivocally, I affirm this; but pray do not misinterpret me. To return to your somewhat crude simile of the candle, you must bear in mind, that it can be relighted so long as wick and grease remain, but so long only. Equally, life can only be recalled to those temporarily—that is to say, prematurely—dead, so long as the capacity to live remains."

"Which, to my immature intelligence and simple understanding," said Waite, "appears to sound remarkably like a paradox."

"Not at all," exclaimed Delancey, for the first time exhibiting something like impatience; "like the candle, the human body is constructed to carry on the vital process for a limited period only, not indefinitely. Each body has a certain measure of innate vitality, and if that vitality be cut short before sufficient time has expired for it to be expended, it can be rehabilitated. That is to say, the flame can be rekindled, and absolute life restored."

"And you solemnly assure us that you have established this fact?"

The doctor asked the question not without some wavering in his scepticism.

"Undoubtedly," returned the old Professor, with the deepest gravity of voice and manner.

"But are you willing to make the experiment?" asked Waite, with eagerness, anxious to put to the test a theory startling, but not without logical possibility.

Delancey took a single sip of the Marcobrunner, pondered a moment over the doctor's question, as he imbibed the rare vintage and appreciated its remarkable beauty; then deliberately answered—

"I am not."

Into the laughter with which Waite greeted this answer, he contrived to throw all the derision he could convey.

"Of course not," he presently exclaimed, with exceeding bitterness.

"That is what I expected to hear. You profess to have discovered the wonderful secret which has baffled scientific investigation throughout all ages, and yet you are unwilling to



exercise the marvellous power you would have us believe your skill has brought you. Pray give us something like a reason. Make the farce complete. I, for one, have been loth, till now, to believe you entirely empiric."

A gentle smile illuming his intellectual face, the old Professor turned up his palms in a wonderfully expressive gesture.

"Think what you please, my dear friend," he said quietly; "your conceptions do not alter facts. Nevertheless, what I have told you is no farce, but a grim reality . . . Do you forget that each body has a soul?"

"By no means; but I was prepared to hear you deny it."

"Nay, I should never do that, I know too much; but there are mysteries beyond the grave, with which one does not care to tamper."

"Is this the ancient pretence of veiling knowledge under mysticism? You are positive in your conviction, yet you will reveal nothing."

Delancey smiled sweetly.

"Why should I?" he asked. "You who belong to the modern school of enlightenment are more than sceptic; and yet Pythagoras knew more than you even dare to guess at."

"And so," exclaimed Waite, with an air of weariness and disappointment, "all this profound knowledge and severe mystery, this deep investigation of the inscrutable secrets of science and the profundities of nature, lead but up to the old idea of metempsychosis. Is that what we have arrived at?"

"We have arrived at the theory of the transmigration of souls," answered Delancey, solemnly. "It is this mystery which I have solved. Wise as the ancient philosophers were, they were absolutely wrong in some of their theories . . . But, Lady Carwardine, this is, I fear, too recondite for your interest."

The old man turned courteously to the hostess, the changing light in whose eyes, as she intently listened to the discussion, indicated how absorbed she was by the theme.

"My dear Professor, you quite mistake," she said. "You never utter a dull word, for your wonderful theories sound so much like truth that they are almost convincing. Pray give us a little insight to your astounding discovery, which seems to be something approaching a glimpse of the next world."

Delancey leant back in his chair, allowing his eyes to wander dreamily up to the ceiling ; while Waite was endeavouring to determine whether the old man was absolutely mad or merely under the inspiration of the Marcobrunner, permitting fancy to run riot with fact, and obscure the clearness of his understanding.

"That is precisely it, Lady Carwardine," the Professor said presently ; "but I fear you are too much imbued with scepticism to accept my truths."

"Nay, do not put it in that way. It is surely an injustice to term scepticism what is belief according to many generations of the Orthodox Church."

"The church," repeated Delancey, meditatively. "But some of the churches have been grievously misled, and misled their adherents."

"Which means——?"

"That, unfortunately, your church has undoubtedly misled its followers. Not designedly, perhaps, but through the lack of sufficient knowledge a difficulty has been overcome by an assumption."

Lady Carwardine shook her head gravely, a little hurt at a positive statement so detrimental to all ecclesiasticism.

"I do not like to hear you say this," she said, gently deprecating.

"But I feel it and know," said Delancey. "The ancient theories about the soul were based on something a little surer than mere assumption. And it is an undoubted fact that there once existed sources of knowledge of which the present age is in complete ignorance . . . . The mere property of life is quite distinct from the soul, although without the existence of the soul life cannot be sustained. When the body dies the soul escapes."

"Which is not altogether a new theory," said Waite, smiling with incredulity.

Disdaining the interruption, the Professor continued his exposition.

"This is something more than a mere truism, dear Lady Carwardine, believe me, as you will see if you follow my argument. The moment that physical life ceases, the soul takes its departure, as we all know, and there remains but the organic life—

nothing more nor less than plant-life—in what we designate the corpse, the body, the tenement which has accommodated the soul during its earthly probation.”

The old man paused as if waiting for some comment from either of his hearers ; but each experiencing a sense of disappointment, neither uttered a single syllable.

After a momentary cogitation the Professor spoke again.

“Once recall life, and you immediately recall a soul to earth.”

Again Waite smiled, and turning to Lady Carwardine, said, with something of cynicism in his tone:

“Once restore life ! Observe the cautious wording . . . The Professor is now talking of the impossible, as we all know.”

Delancey took up the gage instantly.

“The Professor is now talking of the possible, as some of us know,” he retorted, “and herein lies the reason for my reticence when an undesirable experiment was pressed upon me. I would not willingly recall life to a body which has not worn out its proper term of existence, for fear that the soul brought back from another sphere, by an interference with the working of an admirably-arranged system, might be wrongly allotted.”

“What a charming piece of egotism,” exclaimed Waite, “and what a sweetly mystic method there is in its expression.”

“Nay, not so,” said Delancey, with gravity which commanded some respect for his theories. “The soul must undergo a certain training before it is fit to enter upon existence in another world. This, you will say, is no new fact ; but a point has been absolutely lost sight of by those who have expounded this theory of the working of natural phenomena. When a soul returns to occupy an earthly body, it is again immature, as in complete infancy. It takes its form in the mind of the infant, and gains its bias from the teaching to which the infant is subjected, expanding and becoming purer with the increasing knowledge of the child.”

The spirit of persiflage which Waite had at first exhibited vanished by degrees, until he came to listen with all seriousness. “I begin to grasp your theory,” he said, mildly ; “you mean that if a soul were recalled, supposing always such a thing to be possible, to a grown-up person whose term of existence, as you

put it, has been stopped at an incomplete age, its soul would take its bias from the mature mind."

"Precisely."

"And then —— ?"

"There is exactly the difficulty which I foresee. The recalling of a soul in need of a better training, to a mature body, might be doing an injustice to the soul, which we can scarcely comprehend, with our imperfect knowledge. It is, at any rate, an experiment for which I should not like to be responsible."

"And this is why you decline to make the experiment?"

"There you grasp the whole idea with remarkable acumen," said the old Professor, smiling.

"A very clever way out of the difficulty," returned Waite, who was vastly puzzled, partially convinced. "What do you say to it all, Lady Carwardine ?"

The hostess, laughing genially, rose to her feet.

"I say that I will leave you to have your coffee and a cigar."

And Waite, as he held the door open for Lady Carwardine, felt that he had a problem to tackle which was not to be dismissed without grave consideration.

Did the old philosopher, after all, know more than scientific research had yet disclosed ?

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## CHAPTER II.

LEFT alone with the Doctor, Gerard Delancey manifested a singular indisposition for further conversation. He slowly sipped his cup of coffee, while smoking, in a dreamy and pre-occupied way, a single cigarette, but he only replied monosyllabically to his companion's varied efforts at conversation. The cigarette finished, he rose abruptly from his seat.

"I am not well," he said ; "I must leave you to finish your evening alone with our charming hostess."

There was no want of alacrity in the manner in which Waite got upon his feet. He put aside his cigar and came round to the Professor's side.

"What is it ?" he asked. "Can I be of any use to you ?"

"No, no," returned Delancey, almost impatiently. "I am

only what they term indisposed. I must be alone. But do not you stir."

Far from displeased at the premature closing of the *tête-à-tête*, Waite accompanied the old mystic to the drawing-room, apparently both relieved and gratified at the turn events had taken.

Lady Carwardine expressed some surprise at the appearance of the gentlemen after so brief an interval; but when the cause was explained she took the Professor's hand with some solicitude, warmly wishing him a speedy recovery.

The old man briefly said that it was "nothing," and went his way.

"He is not really ill, I hope," exclaimed Lady Carwardine, the moment Waite returned to the drawing-room, after having accompanied the Professor to the hall door.

"Oh, no," was the reassuring reply; "it is nothing, as he said. He gets these singular fits at times, and then he is best alone. He becomes moody and despondent for the time, but the condition speedily passes away. I understand his temperament and disposition too well to thwart him or press unwelcome advice upon him. He is old, you know, and must be humoured."

"He is a very wonderful man," said Lady Carwardine, thoughtfully.

"He is indeed the most extraordinary genius I have ever met. 'Clever' by no means gives an idea of his capacity. He is an absolute marvel, not only of learning, but of originality of thought; and withal, the dearest old soul in creation. . . . But I am not altogether sorry that he has gone, for it leaves us together."

Seating himself beside his hostess, and taking her hand within his own, he looked into her eyes with the wild admiration of a boy.

"My darling Bertha," he exclaimed, with all the enthusiasm of twenty-one, "it really seems too good to be true; too grand to think that the most beautiful woman that was ever created to shed light around her in this world should really love me. And you do, darling?"

Lady Carwardine returned his earnest gaze without replying in words; but there was an eloquence in her expression which

needed no interpretation. Her brilliant eyes were beaming with love.

Waite drew her gently to him, stroking her glossy hair, and kissing her with rapturous delight.

"Only a month," he said, with an air of triumph, "only a month and you are to be mine. It seems too great a reward—too magnificent a happiness ever to be realised."

Bertha Carwardine, as fully satisfied as her lover, returned his kisses, uttering sweetly moulded phrases in return for his. And so, like two novitiates in the Academy of Eros, they cooed the time away, living in that world of delight which is known only to lovers.

Waite had gained a name in the medical and scientific world which brought him not only honour but great profit, and, having maintained his bachelorhood until he was forty-five, now foresaw a future before him, which spoke only of happiness unalloyed with any tincture of care; for in temper and disposition Lady Carwardine was in every way suitable to him. In addition to her great beauty, which, at but a trifle over thirty, was by no means on the wane, she possessed worldly advantages coveted by many. The widow of an Indian civil servant, with whom she had passed but three or four years of wedded life, she was well provided with the necessary worldly gear which "makes the mare to go." Sir Gregory, her husband, had returned from his Indian experiences full of years and with pockets far from empty; but a sudden illness, due to the rigours of our insular climate, had prematurely ended what he had imagined was to be an easy and lengthy retirement. Thus we find Bertha, after a brief period of widowhood, still young, rich, beautiful, prepared to commence another campaign under the auspices of a new commander whom she loved with the sincerest warmth, and with whom she foresaw, as did he, much and great happiness in a union which seemed to have everything to commend it.

Often enough the small cloud that appears on the horizon at sunrise spreads with rapidity, covers what promised to be a serene sky, bursts into a sudden deluge, and ruins hopes that looked like certainties. But here there was not even a small cloud visible—not the minutest wisp of cirrus to rush up the blue dome, followed by other indicators of approaching storm,



and finally expend the accumulated strength in a torrent destined to bring disaster the most fearsome.

The small cloud had not yet risen above the horizon ; but it was there, and was destined to be more swift in its movements than the wildest imagination could have prognosticated.

Shortly after ten o'clock Waite took his leave, and sauntered homeward, in the sweet spring air, from Lady Carwardine's house in the Addison Road, to his own home in the Kensington High Street, his mind occupied the while in dreaming of the bliss awaiting him in the immediate future. He found a charm and rare diversion in watching the thin blue smoke from his cigar wafted delicately on the soft atmosphere, while his thoughts were busied in dreaming of his coming union with the beautiful and accomplished Bertha Carwardine and making an anticipatory delight of joys that were to come.

If he could only have guessed that the thin wisps of tobacco smoke, making fantastic patterns as they were dissipated by the motion of the balmy air, were typical of that small cloud forming in the invisible distance !

Arrived at his own home, he was recalled suddenly from dream-land to the stern realities of everyday life, with all its crudities and vulgar detail.

His servant informed him that "a person" had been to say that Mrs. Burton was worse, and they begged that he would go round and see her that night.

"Very well," he said, with an air more of resignation than hope, as he turned away again from his own door and made his way down to a very humble dwelling near the Warwick Road. Stopping in front of a small house, in which a feeble light, burning in the upper room, indicated the place where the sick woman lay, he gently rapped at the door, which was guiltless of knocker, and gave no visible signs of a bell.

"I am not surprised that she is worse," he was thinking. "It was inevitable ; a career of dissipation and drink, varied only by drink and dissipation, can end in one way only, and were it not that she is not absolutely alone in the world, the sooner the better. . It is little use my coming to see the poor wretch, nothing in this world can save her."

A strange reflection after the conversation with which he and Delancey had beguiled their evening.

As though someone were watching and waiting for his approach, the door was opened almost immediately, and a thin female face appeared in the entry, the pallid countenance of a girl of about sixteen, whose shabby attire spoke more eloquently of a life of hardship than even did her drawn features and unhealthy complexion.

"Oh, sir," she exclaimed eagerly, the accumulated tears dropping slowly from her eyes, "I am so glad you are come; mother gets no rest, and she worries and seems that distressed I hardly know what to do; she don't seem to be in no particular pain, but she never ceases to moan and complain; we can't find nothing to ease her."

Waite looked sympathetically into the worn face, in which there seemed to be no indication of vice, nothing but signs of poverty and suffering and deprivation.

"Well, let us see if anything can be done," he said. "She has taken the medicine?"

"Oh, yes, sir," the girl replied with eagerness, and then turned to lead the way up the narrow stairway to the poorly-furnished room above.

On a bed, which gave the most ghastly indications of a griping poverty, lay the figure of a woman. In her dark eyes there were still remaining traces of a former beauty, but her thin face and pinched features spoke of little but suffering and distress, hinting now, though very slightly, that only a few years before she had possessed many charms of person. Little over thirty years of age she appeared to be progressing well into the forties, for poverty and vice had been hard taskmasters, leaving behind them traces that could not be mistaken.

"Is that you, Liza?" asked a harsh voice, peevish with long continued sickness. "Why can't you send for the doctor as I asked you, instead of always gallivanting?"

"He is here, mother, dear," returned the girl, gently. "He will do you good if you will only be patient."

And she cast an appealing look up into Waite's face, as if in apology for the abominable expression with which her mother had ended her questioning.

The suffering woman turned her eyes, brilliant with an unhealthy glow, towards the doctor, while a faint flush spread over her pallid cheeks—a blush evoked, perhaps, by a sense of shame



for the strong language she had used, this luxury being generally reserved for her daughter's benefit, and not expended for the delectation of visitors not extremely intimate.

As Waite took her enfeebled hand within his own, to observe whether there were any perceptible difference in the movement of the slow-beating pulse, he could hardly suppress the unwelcome reflection that, but for her vicious disposition, this poor, fallen creature, wasted by disease and every form of degrading misery, might have been even as his Bertha—bright, beautiful, instinct with healthful vigour, and seeing many years of the enjoyment of life before her. But here was the poor wretch, reduced by the curse of irresistible drink, and other vices that mainly go with it, to a condition absolutely deplorable, prematurely old, broken in constitution, utterly bankrupt in health and vigour, eking out the few remaining days, or perhaps hours, of a mis-spent life in suffering and mordant remorse.

"How do you feel now?" he enquired of the sufferer, knowing only too well what the answer must infallibly be.

"Lord," she answered, with far more vehemence than her wasted condition would seem to leave possible, "I'm that wracked and tormented I almost wish I was dead and gone. It's hell on earth, that's what it is. Can't you give me nothing to ease me like? Can't I have a drop of brandy, sir?"

Waite shook his head.

"I'm afraid not," he answered gently. "I can give you something that will bring you far more ease than brandy. I know pretty well what you must feel."

The sick woman looked up into his face with an expression of eagerness that moved him to compassion, notwithstanding the callousness natural to the medical practitioner daily and hourly in contact with disease, suffering and approaching death.

"Am I a-going to die?" she asked, her breath coming in gasps, and tears filling her eyes. "You never says nothing of getting well. It's always 'I can give you ease; I can relieve the pain' . . . . Can't you cure me, sir?"

There was an infinity of pathos in the wail of the dying woman, but it was impossible for the doctor to say that which would put her mind at rest.

"Why do you ask me such a question?" he said, gravely shaking his head. "Of course I hope to cure you, but I am not

going to raise expectations that may turn out false. Besides, what have you to wish to live for? What pleasures can such a life as yours have ever known?"

The woman turned on her side and groaned.

"That's hard," she muttered, "awful hard. He ain't never knowed what hardship and poverty is like. He can't understand what temptation means. Aye, it's like 'em all; blast their smooth tongues. But if they was to know what starvation means; if they was to know the comfort of a drop of drink to a poor, famished body, they'd be less hard and cruel."

She added an imprecation which made the doctor start, and, perhaps, recalled to his mind the blasphemous utterances he remembered in his collegiate days. For a moment she seemed to be communing with herself, then, remembering that she was not alone, she turned her face to the doctor.

"What if I die?" she cried aloud, with surprising energy, then added cautiously to her daughter, "Liza, you go down, I want to speak alone with the doctor."

The emaciated daughter slowly crept from the room, closing the door noiselessly after her.

When she was assured that her daughter was safely beyond hearing, the sick woman spoke again.

"It's the gal I'm thinking of," she said. "It don't matter a single damn where I am, or what I comes to. But how about Liza when I'm took? I've tried all I knew to be a good mother to her, and keep her off the streets. Ah, you may believe it or not, just as you like, but it's a gorspel fact, it is. And now if I'm took, what's to come to her? Don't talk of the goodness of God to me. I say it's wicked, not good, to take me when I'm willing to work, and throw that young gal into temptation worse than ever. I'm willing to slave for her. . . . Poor gal, what will she do? What will she do? How can I keep her from this?"

In the impassioned words of the unfortunate woman, and the expressive gesture meant to comprehend her own career in brief, there was the deepest pathos. She, whose life had known almost every vice, still had the one redeeming point of love for her daughter—for the child whose father she had never known, and the doctor's heart was moved with an inexpressible pity. Who could fail to feel sorrow on account of a poor wretch reduced to

this extremity of misery, suffering and distress of mind? None, save those poor hypocrites who make a parade of a pretended Christianity they do not understand, and reduce to the absurd and contemptible the miserable travesty of religion which they have imagined as the teaching of the Most Sublime Life.

Involuntarily Waite's mind turned again to the remarkable contrast presented by this forlorn creature, and the beautiful, virtuous and godly woman who had won his admiration and love: the one the very antithesis of the other. Bad as she was, he could but remember that she was still a sister, and his heart was moved on account of her daughter, for he could not answer the agonised question, "What will she do?" His mind was incapable of fathoming the mysteries of the future, and he could not imagine what was to be the fate of the unfortunate girl, if left at the mercy of a hard and pitiless world, by the untimely death of her only parent. To lose even such a mother as this could be accounted only an irreparable deprivation. The girl was pretty, in her way, although filling but the very humblest position in the social scale, entirely without education. Still, there were terrible dangers in her path—dangers the more appalling to her mother for the reason that she had not striven to escape them, but had, on the contrary, rather courted them, and was now reaping her reward in degradation and suffering.

"You must not take the worst view of things, my good woman," said Waite, gently and with infinite kindness. "At the present moment you are suffering, and cannot judge matters aright. Hope for the best, and at the same time have a little trust in the skill of the profession I represent. Be assured I will do my best for you."

A groan of painful intensity escaped from the woman's throat, and tears began slowly to course down her withered cheeks, upon which the hectic flush was sadly manifest.

"That's a'most like saying you can't do nothing," she said bitterly. "Poor Liza, it seem hard, it do, indeed, to be left alone and uncared for. Let me live, doctor, and I'll work my fingers to the bone for the gal. I'd rather cut off this here right hand than know she was to lead the life as I have. Poverty and drink, aye, it's them as done it. I wouldn't see a dog lead the life I've led, let alone a decent-minded gal, such as Liza. Poverty and

hard work, hard work and poverty, and the streets ; my God ! what a life for a human creature. . . . Poor gal, poor gal !”

She lay back and moaned, more from mental distress than absolute bodily suffering, while the doctor stood by helpless, almost hopeless. He perceived plainly enough that in a couple of days, perhaps even less, a termination must be put to the scene of miserable distress, and he knew that all the skill and learning of the combined world, although it might mitigate the suffering, would be utterly useless in an attempt to avert a fatal termination.

He spoke a few more kindly words to the sufferer, bid her not despair, and said that he would send her something more to alleviate her pain.

Then he took his departure.

Downstairs he found the daughter in a condition of the most abject distress. She looked up into his face through tear-dimmed eyes, seeking to discover some sign of hope ; but his expression betrayed nothing of his thoughts. That his heart was moved with pity both for mother and daughter was without question, but what was there within his power ?

He entered into a slight conversation with the girl, leaving in her hands a small sum of money to procure such little comforts as he knew their limited means were incapable of providing, and then he went his way, heavy-hearted and sad ; for it was indeed terrible to witness such a scene and be aware that human aid could avail nothing.

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### CHAPTER III.

FOR some inexplicable reason, the dying moments of the woman Burton occupied Waite's mind far more than was usual with his patients, and he spent many an anxious moment during an almost sleepless night in pondering her condition, coupled with the singular assertions that had been made by his friend, Delancey, as regarded the possibility of restoring life to the apparently dead—those who were recognised as dead by mundane knowledge.

What if there really were something in the theory which the Professor was at such pains to endeavour to prove to be nothing

less than fact? What if he really had discovered a secret which for untold ages had baffled the skill of the whole scientific world, and which the deepest and most painful research had only left shrouded in an impenetrable mystery?

He could not convince himself that a man of Delancey's undoubted genius had altogether deceived himself by his fancies, least of all could he think that the Professor would so openly assert what he was assured was no more than a chimera—absolutely without foundation. The old man was far too cautious in habit and careful in exposing his views to be utterly and entirely in the wrong. Granted the absurdity of his ability to recall life, there might be some powerful medicament, hitherto unknown, or only partially known, which the old experimentalist had proved of unsuspected efficacy; and if it were so, here was a case where some new remedy might succeed in prolonging life, and proving that science was still to be respected.

After pondering long and deeply over the subject, he determined to repair the first thing in the morning to his friend, and test his willingness to make an experiment on this woman *in extremis*. If the Professor adhered to his idea that his discovery was useful only to restore life, and still persisted in his refusal to test the value of his discovery, no harm would be done by his appeal; if, on the other hand, he would consent to administer the drug to the dying woman, and thus prove that his research had really discovered something of advantage alike to science and humanity, great good might accrue, and no evil could result.

Absorbed by his idea, the doctor hurried through his breakfast, and started off at once for Delancey's house at West Kensington. As he made his way, in the brilliant atmosphere of maturing spring, he was filled with an unaccustomed feeling of sadness. Here was exuberant nature rejoicing in its rejuvenescence, and yet there still remained so much of hopeless suffering amongst the members of the animal world, and mostly in poor humanity.

Vegetable life could lie dormant for a season, and yet blossom forth again in fullest glory when the wonderful medicament of sunshine and increasing warmth was applied, as one of the usual forces of Nature. During the winter the trees were to



all appearance dead ; there was, at any rate, a real cessation of active life.

Why should not animal life be somewhat akin to the vegetable world ? There were marvellous physiological resemblances in construction and means of fecundity, why should there not be some affinity in the mode of life and the means of recalling vital force ? There might be. Who could tell ? Who, at any rate, could positively assert that there was not ?

"I suppose," he thought, as he knocked at the Professor's door, "that I shall find Delancey at work amongst his crucibles and retorts, deep in the mysteries of his profound investigations into the obscurities of science, and, perhaps, altogether unapproachable in mood. I suppose his hands will be stained with acids and officinal puzzles, and his face begrimed with the smoke of his furnace. It is rather a wild-goose chase after all, and I am half inclined not to reveal the real business which has brought me to him."

He was smiling at his own want of resolution, when the door opened and the servant bid him enter.

He was shewn at once into the room he knew well enough. The luxurious study, with its handsome furniture and hangings of silk, gorgeous in their suggestion of Eastern magnificence. A profusion of flowers stood in the window, and at one side there was a glimpse of a conservatory, which seemed to be one rich blaze of beautiful blossom. A stately canary was busily occupied in investigating the contents of its seed box, an amusement which it varied at intervals by preening its feathers and dipping its head into the water trough, while, stretched upon the rug before the empty fireplace, a handsome deer-hound was posing as if for artistic effect.

Waite's anticipation of the condition in which he should find the Professor was sadly at fault. Instead of being arrayed in shabby dressing-gown and slippers, with a faded Turkish cap upon his head, his face wrinkled with care as he investigated the mysteries which were his especial hobbies, the old man was dressed in a very commonplace tweed suit, his head uncovered, his feet encased in very neat shoes, and he was engaged in the very homely and familiar occupation of reading the *Times*.

"Well, my boy," he exclaimed, a genial smile spreading over

his features, "this is an unexpected honour. Have you breakfasted? I have just finished, but there is still balm in Gilead."

"Thanks," returned Waite, "I have already done my morning duty."

"Well, sit ye down. Perhaps you will join me in a pipe?"

The Professor was in his most hearty and genial mood, or, as the doctor expressed it in his thoughts, "quite amenable"—all traces of his indisposition of the previous evening having entirely disappeared.

"I have come to consult you," said Waite, taking the seat to which the Professor, by a wave of the hand, had motioned.

"Ah!" exclaimed Delancey, simply, "then the first thing to do is to light a pipe. It soothes the nerves, strengthens the intellect, and aids the mental processes wonderfully."

"I quite agree," returned Waite, "but it is a pleasure debarred me in the morning."

"Quite so; the fastidious noses of the patients have to be considered. Well, I am not subject to any rules and I suit my fancy."

So saying, the Professor filled his pipe, lighted it with great deliberation, and then commenced slowly to draw the smoke from the smouldering weed.

Waite was manifestly uneasy, hardly knowing how to introduce the subject which was agitating him, and full of misgiving as to how his proposition would be received by the Professor.

The old man smoked in silence, keenly eyeing his visitor the while, as if endeavouring to surmise what had brought him there so early in the day.

"I have a somewhat singular case in hand," said Waite presently, "and I want to ask your advice—perhaps your assistance."

"My advice is at your service if it is of any good. My assistance—well, that is another matter. But let me hear: unburden your mind."

"It is the case of a woman who, but for excesses in life—intemperance and other vices—should now be in the full vigour both of intellect and body. She is little over thirty, I should think, but the life she has led, the privations she has undergone, the general abuses of her health, have reduced her to a wreck, and ere many hours are over she must join the majority.



This is the natural conclusion, but when she is dead she will leave behind her a young daughter, who will be quite penniless and entirely at the mercy of the world."

"Well, well, these things will occur. You know, my dear boy, that where my purse can be of use it is quite at your service. I am glad you have not hesitated to come to me. Tell me exactly what you want, and I accept your voucher for the genuineness of the case."

Waite shook his head.

"It is not that. Money, the all-powerful, will be as useful as ever—when the time comes, but at present I had not given a thought to that. I must confess to you that in this woman nature is worn out, and all the drugs of the pharmacopœia cannot aid her, except as anodynes. But now comes the point. You are in advance of the medical profession in one particular at least."

Delancey smiled a smile, in which there was a decided spice of malice.

"So-ho!" he exclaimed, "the acknowledged medical practitioner comes to consult with the empiric, the enthusiast, the charlatan. Surely this is a reversal of the usual procedure. Last night, if my failing memory does not deceive me, you were inclined to deride some of the ideas which I broached because of your superior knowledge."

Waite shook his head gravely.

"No, never that, never that, Delancey. I know your intellect to be many times stronger than my own, and I know your learning to be deeper by many depths than mine. If I appeared to deride, it was but to egg you on to making an admission, which I had failed before to draw from you. I know your knowledge of medicine is profound, and if I had not a certain faith in you, be sure I should never have come to seek your assistance."

There was a momentary silence, during which the Professor smoked assiduously, and the doctor toyed somewhat nervously with the hat he held in his hand.

"Well, well," said the old man presently, "perhaps I might be of use if you told me specifically what you desire. Let me hear."

"Briefly, it is this," said Waite, speaking very slowly and with

immense deliberation. "You told me that you knew of a drug or medicament which was so powerful that you believed it could even restore life."

"Believed that it could restore life! I have never yet told you of my fancies or my imaginings. Recall the fact that I have never discussed probabilities with you, I have discussed fact only; and it is a fact that the thing of which I spoke can restore life to the apparently dead."

"The apparently dead, aye; and you went on to specify the meaning of the term you used. You said that what we considered death was often merely a suspension of the physical functions."

"Quite so."

"Well, there we were somewhat at issue, but it is useless to discuss terms and fall out upon the splitting of straws. The point is this, if this drug is so wonderful in its properties, that it can restore life, will it not sustain life? You said that you would not experiment upon a person supposed, as you put it, to be dead, for fear that the soul, which had taken flight, might not return, but be replaced by some departed soul seeking rehabilitation in the flesh, for regeneration and purification."

"Quite so. Completion of earthly education. Yes, that is so."

"But if it will retain life while it yet subsists, it would be more than a blessing to humanity. When a body is so enfeebled as that to which I have alluded, it would be a mercy and a charity to prolong the life and restore health. Your drug can do that much, at any rate, and in making this trial you would convince me that your researches had not been wasted, while you could in no way render possible the interchange of souls, which you professed to dread. Briefly, will you administer the drug to my patient and test its efficacy?"

"I have no doubt of its efficacy," returned the Professor readily. "I have already experimented amply, and I know all its effects; but I could not guarantee that it would bring about the end you desire. As to restoring life, of that I no longer retain the faintest scintilla of doubt, for I have tested it and proved its efficacy!"

At this positive assertion of what seemed to surpass the marvellous, Waite winced. He was willing enough to believe in a drug, which could assist the bodily functions, and aid in

restoring health and strength, but going beyond that seemed ridiculous; and he almost regretted that he had come to the Professor, for his words seemed to prove what the world believed—that the old man was a mere quack, a dreamer, whose studies had turned his brain.

“Then here is a fresh field of investigation,” said Waite slowly. “I came to ask you to make this experiment, and I repeat the request?”

Delancey shook his head.

“I cannot say. I cannot say. You ask me to apply it to a use for which it was not intended.”

“True; but, in any case, no harm can be done. The woman has not many hours of life left in her. You cannot accelerate her death, this is quite certain; you may be of the greatest aid in prolonging her life and enabling me, afterwards, to restore her health. Do not hesitate. Remember that it is in the cause of science, and that you may be the means of making known one of the grandest medicines that the profession has ever known, even amongst the ancient and the most modern practitioners.”

“Well, well, well,” said Delancey, rising from his seat and slowly pacing the room.

When the old man allowed himself to be thrown into a state of dubiousness, Waite knew that he had as good as won the victory, and he was convinced that very little pressing of his point would now gain his end.

“It is true that no harm could be done,” said Delancey, after a few moments’ cogitation, speaking as if in reverie.

“That is certain,” replied Waite, eagerly, “and the greatest possible good may accrue. Come, old friend, make up your mind.”

“Good might result,” said Delancey, dubiously; “but I do not know; I do not know.”

And he commenced again to pace the room, evidently much perturbed.

“Supposing,” he said, presently, pausing abruptly in his rapid walk, “supposing I were to consent to what you ask, are you certain that the fabric is capable of being built up again into health and strength? She is, apparently, dying of something like inanition.”

“Hardly that. The bodily energies have been overtaxed and

terribly abused, and a general collapse has ensued. But I am convinced that, if life can be prolonged so that there will be a probability of nourishment having a fair chance of acting, health may be restored. The vital spark is at its lowest ebb."

The Professor took another rapid turn up and down the room, paused for a moment, to look aimlessly into the conservatory, then came back to the doctor.

"I will try," he said, simply, laying aside his pipe. "Wait a moment, while I get a phial of the preparation."

And he hurriedly left the room.

A look of triumph came, instantly, into the doctor's face.

"It is but an experiment," he said; "and in any case it will put to the test some of his wisdom. He professes so much and is so wonderfully confident, that it is not easy entirely to doubt what he professes; if this trial is efficacious, I shall no longer doubt his wisdom—and yet, after all, it savours of the absurd. The age of alchemy is long since past, and, I expect, he will simply produce some drug of which we all along have known the properties, and, when failure ensues, he will protest that his secret preparation has not had a fair test."

The next moment, Delancey entered the room, hat in hand.

"Come," he said, quietly and with an air of unostentatious confidence, that was very reassuring to his friend. "I am ready."



## CHAPTER IV.

THERE was a very striking contrast in the demeanour of the two men as they left the Professor's house. While Waite appeared to be in a condition of nervous unrest, Delancey was light and almost gay in his manner, exhibiting not the faintest trace of either doubt or anxiety. He chatted gaily, making no reference to the important matter which they had in hand, until his companion's reserve attracted his attention, and he commented upon his apparent preoccupation of mind.

"Necessarily, I am anxious," returned the doctor; "who would not be, when such a tremendous issue is at stake? But I do not think it is that which is distressing me. I feel a sudden kind of oppression, as though we were upon the eve of witnessing

some scene of unparalleled distress or as if some terrible disaster were about to befall."

"Purely a mental condition," said Delancey. "I trust it is not a real prescience. This is the kind of feeling which you should use every effort to shake off, and you, of all men, should be above these fancies, which are usually considered to be purely feminine."

"It is nothing, no doubt; all the same, there is the feeling, and it is not so easy to shake it entirely off, in a moment."

They passed along the highway and over the railway bridge, then along in front of St. Mary Abbots Terrace. In a moment they came in view of Waite's house, and were about to pass on, when the door opened and a man came forth, whose figure was familiar to them both. He was a servant of Lady Carwardine's.

Espying the doctor, the man hurried down the steps and out into the road.

"Oh, sir," he exclaimed eagerly, "I am so glad I have found you. The mistress is unwell, and they want you to come round at once."

Waite changed colour and glanced hurriedly at Delancey, as though to read in his friend's face, either the right to hope or a foreboding of calamity.

But the old man's face was impassive.

"Do you know what is wrong?" asked the doctor, as though he realised that there was something more than a mere passing indisposition to be dealt with.

The servant shook his head.

"I can't say, sir. They bid me come round and bring you back, at once. That was all."

There was a somewhat large meed of superstition in the doctor's composition, and he could not suppress the feeling of impending ill that had attacked him.

"There is something very wrong," he muttered, hurriedly. "I knew it. I felt it."

He had turned to Delancey, as if irresolute as regarded the occult experiment which they had been about to undertake. He felt, at the moment, that science might go to the dogs, and all his patients die incontinently, but he would hasten to give succour to the woman he loved.

Delancey appeared to divine what was passing in his mind.

"Come," he said. "Let us lose no time. I will walk round to Lady Carwardine's with you."

And they passed swiftly and silently up the Addison Road.

They found the hall door of Lady Carwardine's residence wide open, and a frightened-looking servant maid standing inside, as if she had been watching for the doctor's approach.

"Come this way, sir, please," said the girl, hurrying upstairs ; and, while Waite followed her, Delancey moved leisurely into the dining-room and seated himself in an arm-chair.

"This is a sad case of highly-developed cerebral excitement, consequent upon the disturbing influence of what is called love. What is my lady's ailment, I wonder? The megrims, they would have called it, a few decades since. Modern fashion terms all these little weaknesses 'indisposition'—and yet she is hardly the woman to give way to fanciful illnesses. Let us trust it is nothing serious, for her sake as well as for that of the susceptible youth of the medical profession, who is so obviously disturbed."

The Professor had revolved in his mind, for what seemed but the period of a few moments, the problem as to how long it would take the anxious lover to soothe the indisposition of his mistress, when he was startled to see Waite hurriedly enter the room.

There was such a look of wild distress in the doctor's eyes, such an unearthly pallor in his cheeks, that Delancey started to his feet, alarmed and distressed.

"Heavens, man ! what is it ?" he demanded.

All the calmness and self-possession characteristic of the medical profession seemed entirely to have deserted the doctor.

"SHE IS DEAD," he uttered, in a hollow voice, which indicated the deepest distress and despair. "My poor darling is dead. Come up, Delancey, come up at once. You can save her."

"It is impossible," exclaimed the Professor. "Yesterday in such robust health and to-day dead. Your excitement has overcome you. It cannot be."

"Nay, but it is so. There has been a fit of some kind, and the fact is undoubted. Come, Delancey, your drug ; in the name of common humanity, come and save her. I can do nothing."



"I cannot realise it," said Delancey, absently.

"But you must," returned Waite, eagerly. "Come at once, I tell you, and if there is any efficacy in your discovery, you can restore her to us. Do not hesitate, moments are precious. Come."

He took the old man almost roughly by the arm, and endeavoured to drag him away.

"Calm yourself," exclaimed Delancey; "this excitement is unseemly. You are being deceived by your affection for the poor girl."

"I am not, I am not," returned Waite, in an agonised voice. "By the friendship you bear for both of us, do not hesitate. Come, and put your discovery to the test."

"But what if——" commenced Delancey, when Waite interrupted him almost fiercely.

"Do not raise obstacles. Another minute's delay and you may be too late. In the name of common mercy, come, and do your best."

The old man seemed terribly perplexed. He had already told Waite that he had tested the efficacy of his discovery, and knew it to be infallible; but he had also explained the theory he held with regard to the interchange of souls, and had forcibly expressed his unwillingness to repeat an experiment he had already made.

"I cannot," he said, gently. "If the poor soul is dead, it is the decree of fate. It is her lot to leave us thus early."

Then the doctor appealed to him in impassioned tones, bidding him remember the happy hours he had spent in Lady Carwardine's society, and asking him to try and realise what must be the position of a man bereaved as Waite found himself. Without the woman he loved, life seemed to be worthless, while, with her, it offered every prospect of happiness which an earthly career can give.

"And yet you hesitate," he ended, "you, who profess to have in your power the means of restoring her to the life from which she has been taken with this awful suddenness. Man, if there is a single germ of human feeling in you, come and do your best."

Some new idea seemed suddenly to strike the old man.

"If I try," he said, slowly, "you will absolve me from conse-



quences? You will think of your own rashness, and not blame me, if——”

“I will thank you to my dying day,” interrupted Waite, fervently. “I again implore you not to hesitate.”

“I will come,” replied Delancey, simply.

The room, in which Lady Carwardine had been stricken with this mortal sickness presented a scene of the most afflicting woe. The corpse lay at full length upon the bed, the face rigid in death, the skin an ashen grey, the lips colourless, the eyes wide open, already glazing with the film of lost vision. Beside the lifeless form stood one of the maids, weeping in a silent agony of distress, while, curled up in a chair, was another servant, whose sobs were heartrending.

Delancey approached the bed with calm deliberation, his demeanour in striking contrast to the state into which the doctor had allowed himself to be betrayed. He stooped over the prostrate form, looked into the sightless orbs, placed his hand over the heart, and took the nerveless hand within his own.

“It is, indeed, so,” he said, in a low voice. “Calm yourself, Waite, and be prepared to act. The animal heat has almost entirely gone. We must, therefore, seek artificial aids.”

He gave a few simple directions for preparing hot bottles, and the maid hurried below to carry out his injunctions, seeming to throw away half her distress with the necessity for activity, and the fresh train of thoughts brought about by the requirements of the situation.

There was a flask of brandy upon a table and an empty glass, from which the servants had evidently been administering the stimulant to the dead woman.

Delancey took up the glass and bid the girl who had been sobbing in the chair, go instantly below and bring up a jug of hot water. Restored to some kind of reason by this request, and obviously jumping to the conclusion that they had all been mistaken as to their mistress' condition, the girl hastened off upon her errand. Then Delancey composedly rinsed out the glass, and, taking a small phial from his pocket, set it down upon the table beside the glass.

“Listen,” he said quietly to Waite. “You are about to witness what you have never seen before. Compose yourself, therefore,

and bring your nerves under control. There is little to do. First we must apply the hot water bottles to the feet, then we will administer the remedy, and, after that, a few efforts at artificial respiration will bring about the result we wish to see."

He spoke with calmness and the most undoubted confidence, so that Waite accepted his directions with equal confidence, deeming all the time that he had himself, perhaps, been mistaken as to the condition of the pallid form upon the bed.

"I understand," he said, bending once more over the lifeless figure; and, again, he convinced himself that he was under no misapprehension.

There was not a trace of remaining life in her; on the contrary, there was every indication that Lady Carwardine was dead and past all hope of medical aid. All the signs he knew but too well.

Delancey was standing by, calm, placid, patient.

The moment the servant appeared with the hot bottles, the old man seemed to be electrified into an unusual activity, his eyes glowed with an unaccustomed brilliance, and his whole form seemed suddenly transformed to that of a young man again. He bid Waite place the hot water bottles into the necessary position, then he took the jug of hot water and half filled the wine glass. Into this, he poured about a table spoonful of the liquid from the phial, and held it for a moment to the light.

Busy in the special task he had in hand, Waite was unobservant of this preparation. Had he not been occupied otherwise, he no doubt would anxiously have watched the mingling of the two liquids, anticipating a sudden change of colour from limpid transparency to bright green, or amber, or glowing crimson, according to all the precedents of occult preparations; but in this he would have been disappointed, for there appeared to be no change whatever, the clear water still appearing bright and colourless, absolutely unaltered in aspect.

When the heat-producing apparatus was properly adjusted, Delancy approached the form of the dead woman, and, gently raising her head, poured the liquid into the nerveless mouth. Then, with one dextrous movement of the body, he watched

the artificial process of swallowing. The liquid had been absorbed, as if by natural means.

"Now," he said; and, motioning to Waite to assist, they commenced to carry out the usual modes of producing artificial breathing.

With an anxiety which was painful in its intensity, Waite watched the inanimate form. Could he be mistaken? Was there really a hope of returning life?

The dullness of the still open eyes seemed to gradually disappear, and a light, as of consciousness, returned. Then there was a sound as of a faint sigh, and respiration was restored, at first in slow and painful gasps, but, gradually, this grew into easier and more natural motion, and the breathing became normal.

Waite could hardly believe the evidences of his senses. But a few moments before his knowledge and experience told him that Lady Carwardine was absolutely and positively dead; now he beheld her gradually returning to life and consciousness. Was this a miracle, or had he been mistaken in the well-known evidences of death? Had she, after all, but been in a kind of trance?

He had no time to speculate upon what might have been, for here was convincing evidence that she lived and breathed again.

"It is done," whispered Delancey, as unmoved as though he had simply witnessed the effects produced by an anæsthetic skilfully administered.

In an agony of suspense, as he watched, Waite made no reply, and presently he had reason to doubt whether or not his senses were playing him false, and his eyes showing him impossibilities; for the patient was stirring uneasily, as though endeavouring to change the position in which she was lying. The doctor held his breath in astonishment, for there could be no kind of doubt that the beloved form before him, only a few moments separated from vital activity, and to all appearances gone from this world, never again to be brought back, was instinct with life. The situation admitted of no question, for presently her lips commenced to move slightly, although not to form articulate sounds, as though she were endeavouring to speak, but had not sufficient bodily energy to pronounce ideas or even words.

In another moment the gradually disappearing dullness of the eyes had vanished altogether, and the doctor was fain to convince himself that he had witnessed what he had hitherto been inclined to regard as a miracle. For Lady Carwardine was most certainly alive.

After a very brief interval, the eyelids drooped, then gently closed, and the woman who, but a few moments previously, had been what we are accustomed to call "dead," was restored to life, and gently slumbering, as might a tired infant.

Delancey had been standing by, immovable as a statue, but he had been intently observing in what way the man of science was impressed by the manner in which the administration of the occult drug had taken effect.

Presently Waite turned and grasped the old man's hand.

"It is wonderful," he muttered. "It passes belief."

"Nay, be not hasty," said Delancey. "It is but annulling the ignorance that has existed for ages. The experiment is only half complete, however. You do not know all. Wait until she speaks . . . science can deal with vital energy, for that it understands; but the soul is still a mystery. I warned you, before the experiment was made, and we do not yet know what is to be the result."

There was a smile of supreme satisfaction upon the doctor's lips, and he was inclined completely to disregard Delancey's words. But the old Professor was undergoing a probation of terrible fear and doubt. He was now watching the slumbering form with an anxiety that was surprising, and, to Waite, appeared quite unwarrantable; the expression of his eyes was full of eager expectancy, his breath laboured and uneasy.

The period of suspense was slight, for, in a few moments, the patient's eyes opened languidly, and the glance she cast around the room at once indicated that she was restored to perfect consciousness, as well as to bodily life.

His finger upon her pulse, about the throbbing of which there could be no scintilla of doubt, Waite now asked, in professional manner and tone :

"Do you feel easier?"

Lady Carwardine had looked into his eyes and appeared quite to recognise his face and remember her surroundings, but she

seemed to be unable to speak. In a moment, however, all doubt of her condition was at an end.

Her eyes closed, she turned uneasily, and then muttered a few words which roused the greatest horror in the minds of both the anxious doctor and the fearing Professor. One hoped that his ears had deceived him ; the other was so taken by surprise as to be absolutely terrified. But there could be no doubt as to the words the beautiful lips had uttered, for they were clearly articulated.

And they were not the grateful and graceful syllables that might have been expected from a refined and cultivated lady, who had never given utterance to an idea that was not chaste and beautiful. They were not even the language of ordinary respectability, but the obscene and hideous foulness of the gutter—the abominable sounds familiar to the lowest and most degraded form of metropolitan life.

As the muttered words fell upon Delancey's ears, he turned from the bedside with a groan of anguish, and moved over to the window, where he stood, in an agonised silence, agitated by an emotion which Waite, had he had time to notice it, would have failed entirely to understand.

The doctor stood at the bedside, as one might in some unholy dream. The very existence of the sick woman, Burton, upon whom he had intended to make experiment with the elixir, that the Professor had perfected as the fruit of his many years of elaborate research, had slipped entirely from his memory ; and yet, by a few words, he seemed to be transported in spirit to the abandoned creature's bedside.

Was he, indeed, but in a dream ? Was it possible that the woman, whose nature he knew to be of the sweetest, and whose disposition was gentle and loving—was it possible that her thoughts could have framed and her pure lips given utterance to this low and revolting language ? Nay, it was no dream, but a ghastly and horrible reality. He could not realise it, he could not comprehend it ; his senses could hardly believe it, yet it was, indeed, fact. And the terrible thought came to him that Lady Carwardine had been in no trance. Appearances had not deceived him ; she had been really dead, and this accursed potion had restored her to life, but given her another soul ; and it was this against which the Professor had warned



him, when he said in his mysterious way, "You will think of your own rashness and not blame me, if——"

He remembered, now, how he had interrupted the sentence and not heard the dread conclusion of which that "if" had been the prelude; and he recognised the horrible fact that his darling's body was recalled to life, but that her soul was gone for ever, to be replaced by some vagrant, seeking regeneration in this world, but rehabilitated in a mature, instead of an infant's, being. Better she were dead—better a thousand times than this.

Meantime, Lady Carwardine lay in a state of semi-somnolence, breathing uneasily, and muttering, at intervals, words which were painful to hear—obscene, blasphemous, horrible. What could be done? The doctor asked himself the question a dozen times, and a dozen times came the inevitable answer—"Nothing."

In his position by the window, Delancey appeared to be undergoing a trial of great heaviness, battling with some half-formed resolve, which he feared to mature and put into execution.

Ere ten minutes had gone by, he returned to Waite's side, his face white, his frame agitated by some painful emotion, which the doctor failed to comprehend.

"I warned you," he whispered, "but you would not take heed. Why did you urge me to this, and why was I fool enough to give way? But a road lies out of the difficulty. There is another preparation which will be an antidote to the ill effects the elixir has wrought."

Waite looked vacantly into his face, as though hardly comprehending the meaning his words conveyed; the old man took from his pocket a little phial and poured a few drops of its contents into the wine glass that had before been used; this he filled up with brandy, and left it standing on the table.

"When she regains complete consciousness," he said in a whisper, "give her this brandy, it will soothe her, and send her into a gentle sleep, which will last for long. Will you do this?"

Waite gave a sign of assent, and the Professor went swiftly from the room, and, hastening below, left the house.

Then the doctor sank into a chair, and gave way to a storm of painful thoughts, his eyes cast to the ground, for he feared to

look into the terrified face of the maid servant who stood by, alarmed and agitated almost as deeply as himself.

In the course of a few minutes Lady Carwardine opened her eyes, and strove to raise herself in the bed. Waite immediately rose and stood beside her, but as he looked into her face it seemed to him that he was beholding not the woman he loved, not the gentle and beautiful being who was so dear to him, but another person. The wonderful beauty of the features was there unchanged, but the expression upon the lips, the light burning in the eyes, was a transformation from the beauties of heaven to all the horrors of hell. No trace of gentleness, no sign of softness, no indication of a noble disposition remained, it was the expression of a fiend—malicious, wicked, terrible to see.

“Bertha,” whispered Waite gently, his eyes for the moment suffused as his emotion almost became the master of him, “do not exert yourself, you are better lying down.”

A fierce and horrible laugh broke from Lady Carwardine’s lips. “Go to the devil with your fine words,” she screamed, and her eyes wandered round the room from window to ceiling, and back to the small table, upon which stood the flask of brandy, and the glass which Delancey had filled.

“What’s that on the table—drink? Hand it over.”

Waite shuddered, as he took the glass in his hand. “This is a little brandy,” he said; “this will soothe you; will you drink it?”

“Drink it?” she returned, laughing again that horrible laugh that had so shocked its hearers before. “Of course I will, you blasted idiot; I’m not one to make two bites at a cherry.”

As she spoke she seized the wineglass, and eagerly gulped down its contents. Then she lay back upon her pillow and closed her eyes.

In a few moments she was in a deep sleep.

Then Waite turned away, and, as he moved, his eyes met those of the maid. One glance passed between them, a glance that seemed full of deep meaning and dreadful significance.

“Sir, it is very dreadful,” said the girl, and the next moment she was giving way to a passion of tears. “To think of the poor mistress talking so; it makes my heart bleed, it do indeed.”



Waite remained silent for a single moment. Then he said, "She will sleep for some time. When she wakes send for me again. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," returned the girl, and the next moment Waite hurried from the room.

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## CHAPTER V.

ONCE in the street the doctor moved forward at a brisk pace.

"I must have motion and work to distract my mind and drive it from dwelling upon the horrors of this morning," he said to himself.

There were many patients who claimed his attention, but yet he felt that he could hardly bring himself to visit them. He determined to try the effect of rapid motion as a means of distraction.

He walked up the Addison Road, turned along by Shepherd's Bush Green, and then, by Brook Green, down to the main road leading from Kensington to Hammersmith. Here he walked towards town, passing his own house and approaching Holland Park.

He had made up his mind to forego visiting his patients for that day. His mind was far too perturbed for him to be able to give attention to any of the cases he had in hand. But now, when he was coming near to Earl's Court, he changed his mind somewhat, as his thoughts turned to the poor woman Burton upon whom he had intended to make the experiment with Delancey's specific—Delancey's infernal discovery that had wrought such horrible mischief. Would to God, he thought, he had never heard of the abomination.

He turned down to Earl's Court and called in at the unfortunate woman's abode. He was by no means surprised to find the house in confusion, and two or three neighbouring gossips trying to comfort the weeping daughter.

The moment these creatures caught sight of him they exclaimed, "Too late, doctor, the poor thing's gone."

"I feared it," he returned. "When did she die?"

"Two hours since," replied one of the women.

Then the whole horrible truth flashed in upon his mind.

It was the soul of this unfortunate creature, this slave of her own passions and vices, which, freed from its earthly tenement, but not yet prepared for entry into another sphere of existence, had found rehabilitation in the beautiful woman, recalled to life by the infernal specific of the Professor. Was the old man, he asked himself, really human, or was he some fiend incarnate? Why had he been permitted to unfathom the deep mystery which had puzzled countless ages, and why had fate ordained that so pure-minded a woman as Lady Carwardine, his loved and beautiful Bertha, should be the chosen receptacle for the sin-stained soul of this abandoned wretch?

The Professor had been right in his estimation of the drug he had discovered, and its effects had been what he had anticipated. What was to be the outcome of the second potion which he had administered, and would the patient, on waking from the sleep into which she had fallen, be restored to herself, or would she still be beautiful in body, but foul and horrible in soul? If this latter were to be the condition, how long would it take before she could be purified and brought back to herself? Was it possible that this could ever be brought about?

Full of an agonised doubt and fear, Waite felt that hope was dormant, if not entirely dead within him, and he wandered away from the mean dwelling at Earl's Court, and, going towards Kensington Gardens, found himself some time later pacing backwards and forwards under the trees, so distressed in mind as to be reduced almost to madness.

The budding trees, showing new signs of revivification and the coming restoration of beauty, the gorgeous spring flowers glinting in all their magnificence in the rays of pure sunlight, seemed to mock him. The twittering birds that hopped from bough to bough, or flitted rapidly through the air, seemed but to jeer at him with their joyous notes and agile movements. He himself was dull and heavy of limb and weary of mind. Why was he thus selected to be the subject of this exquisite torment? Had he transgressed the laws by which he should have been governed, and had his own greed for knowledge brought a punishment more terrible than he seemed capable of bearing? It would have been bad enough, hard enough to bear, that the woman he loved, with all the fervour of a powerful nature, should be prematurely taken from him: it was infinitely worse that she should be trans-

formed from what he thought nearly approached the angels to what indubitably was a condition of fiends only.

It was late in the day when he returned home, jaded, hollow-eyed, broken in mind and spirit.

"Had any message been sent for him?" he asked, and with the negative reply there came to him the conviction that Lady Carwardine still slept.

There was still hope. She might waken relieved of the horrible incubus.

Without a thought of refreshment for his wearied body he started off immediately to see in what condition the patient might be.

The door of Lady Carwardine's house was opened by one of the girls who had been with her when he arrived in the morning.

"How is she?" he asked.

"Still sleeping, sir," was the answer. "You know you said we were to send for you immediately my lady awoke."

"Yes, I remember," he said. "But it has been a long slumber. I will go up and see how she looks."

How dull, how inexpressibly drear was the aspect of the house, which heretofore had presented always a joyous and bright appearance. Happiness had always been the characteristic of this dwelling. Now it seemed as a charnel house. The very atmosphere was laden with the suggestion of death, misery, suffering.

The quiet of the sick room was infinitely oppressive. The blinds were drawn and only faint glimmerings of the exterior brightness found their way into the apartment.

As he entered, the girl, who was watching, rose silently and held up her hand, as an intimation that Lady Carwardine still slept. She feared that any noise, however slight, might awake her.

Waite approached the bed and looked down into the face that was calm and wonderfully placid, and there came instantly to his mind the conviction that this was not sleep.

He took the pulseless hand within his own, raised the depressed eyelid, and looked into the sightless orb.

The wan face was chill. He turned wearily from the bedside.

"Have you not noticed how long she has been like this?" he mechanically asked the servant.

The girl started, and her eyes opened wide in surprise.

"She has been sound asleep ever since you left, sir," she answered.

"Asleep!" he repeated, with a bitterness which was beyond expression. "Aye, asleep, indeed! She will never waken again."

"Oh, sir, do not say so," exclaimed the maid, bursting instantly into tears. "My poor mistress!"

"It is, indeed, so. . . . It was the heart. . . . I have feared many times it might be so."

He uttered the mendacity with calm professional ease. But, in his mind, he knew that it was but a lie of *convenience*. The true state of the case needed no guessing. Delancey, knowing the condition his potion had brought about, had taken the only course that could relieve them of a terrible anxiety and responsibility.

The second drug he had administered was a poison.

Waite recalled, now, the cautious wording of the old man's sentence.

He had said, "Give her this and she will sleep for some time," not "for some hours" or any specific period; for he knew that it would be for ever.

How he had controlled the impulse to throw himself upon the corpse and ease his tortured heart in wailing out his distress, Waite hardly knew. How he got away from the scene of distress, he could never remember. He knew only that the strength which he had found to control his emotions in the chamber of death had completely deserted him when he had got outside the house, and, as he hurried homewards, he was sobbing bitterly—sobbing out the untold agony of a broken heart.

What was now before him? he asked himself. A terrible solitude, made infinitely more bitter by the horrible secret that he was compelled to hide within himself. What value had life now for him? Could he ever find solace for the loss he had incurred? Could he ever forgive himself for the experiment he had made upon the being who was dearest to him of all things upon earth?

Upon his own threshold he turned again. He could not go in, for he could not rest. Why should he suffer this agony alone? It was Delancey who had brought the ill, and he it was who should suffer.

It was with a horrible desire for vengeance that he made his way to West Kensington, with some immature determination in his heart. Come what might, he would have a reckoning with the Professor, who had at first recalled his beautiful love back to a condition that was worse than a thousand deaths, and then, without a single sign of remorse, had administered to her a potion which he knew must end fatally. The old man was a devil in disguise, a foul murderer, who deserved only to be denounced and to suffer the penalty of his atrocious, his double crime.

When he stood at Delancey's door, the servant noticed his rigid lips and expression of portentous gravity. In answer to the question whether Delancey was at home, he answered that he was in his laboratory, and Waite said he would find his way there unannounced. He knew the house intimately, and walked at once to the large room built out at the back, where the old man had carried on his experiments and investigations into the secrets of science.

With his hand upon the door-latch, he asked himself why had he come there, and the answer came vaguely. Was it for vengeance? Was it to let the terrors of the law be inflicted upon this man, who, for long, had been his intimate friend and often his adviser? He could not say. He was there, and he knew that there was a desire for revenge burning wildly within him, a fierce desire which gave no thought to consequences.

He turned the handle to enter the room, which was wrapped in a profound silence, and started back, for a moment, at the scene which he witnessed.

There could never be order in such an apartment as the old man's laboratory, but there is a sort of organised disorder, which nearly resembles neatness. Waite knew the appearance of the room well enough, and how Delancey had been able, almost without looking, to put his hand upon any bottle, or crucible, or retort which he wanted. An order of a certain kind had certainly reigned in the room, but now all was in a condition which could be likened only to chaos.

Upon the tables were broken retorts and little furnaces overturned, relics of bottles and glass measures and scraps of paper, knives and pincers and metal holders for heated vessels, all in a wild confusion. The bottles upon the shelves were disarranged, many overturned, and gaps here and there showed where special preparations had been removed. But it was the floor which showed the greatest evidences of the revolution which had taken place.

Dozens of bottles, apparently of all sizes, had been hurled against the metal work of the largest furnace, and now lay in shattered fragments around, their contents dribbling about the room and showing in many-coloured splashes upon the furniture.

Instinctively, Waite's mind rushed to a conclusion—the right one—and he looked around for the Professor himself. The old man was curled up in an armchair, apparently asleep. But when the doctor touched him he realised at once the terrible truth.

The Professor had taken poison.

In his fingers was grasped a slip of paper, which Waite at once took away from the cold clasp of death. It was, he thought, no doubt, a message for him.

“MY SECRET DIES WITH ME.”

That was all the old man had written—five simple words, which needed no interpretation upon the doctor's part.

Waite placed the message in his pocket, before calling in the old man's servant.

“Thus it ends, then,” he said. “Perhaps it is better so, for I do not know what my passion might have led me to. In his remorse he has taken his own life, and, as he truly says, this infernal secret dies with him. Better so. Better so.”

\* \* \* \* \*

There is a sad-faced man working in the gold mines of Kimberley, in Western Australia, who associates with none, and is looked upon as altogether uncompanionable. He toils incessantly, without regarding the result of his labour, and a general idea has got about that, in braving the terrors of an exception-

ally severe climate, he is not striving to win wealth, but to find in death an escape from the recollections of some fearful past.

This is the once eminent doctor, now a prematurely-aged man, whose hair is white as snow, and whose shrivelling skin might belong to one who had known seventy years of hardship and suffering instead of less than fifty years of peaceful enjoyment.

THOMAS SHAIRP.



# BELGRAVIA

JANUARY, 1898.

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## A House of Horrors.

THIS is a true story of facts that have occurred, and that are occurring.

I admit at once that my tale is improbable, even impossible, but a number of men and women, many still living, have seen and heard the things I am about to relate. Of course, you may assume that they were all the victims of hysterical delusions, that it is all a matter of Auto-Telepathic-Hypnotic-suggestion, or any other sonorous collection of syllables you please to string together—but that these things were seen and heard, and are still seen and heard is indisputable.

For myself, I do not fancy I am of a neurotic, or have a highly-strung imaginative temperament. I am a Captain in a Native Indian Regiment, thirty-two years of age, sound in wind and limb, and generally “grass” what I aim at, so imagine my eyesight is not faulty. I have done a good share of active service, and can honestly say I never felt nervous in my life before the month of November last year.

And this is the story.

The daylight was beginning to lengthen into twilight as the train slackened, and finally stopped, at the little Irish country railway station of Ballykinkope.

I gathered together my papers, folded my rug round my golf clubs, handing the tall, grey-headed porter, who opened the carriage door, my gun-case and portmanteau.

“Another bag in the van? Right, sor. Will yer

honour be wanting a kyar?" he enquired. "Where will ye be going to?"

"To Killman Castle," I replied.

"Then 'twill be you are Captain Gordon that the Castle kyar is just afther comin' for. This way, sor."

He led me out of the wooden building that did duty for the station offices, to where a tall dog-cart was waiting, and soon my luggage was stowed away, a wizen little old groom seated beside me, driving the raking sixteen-hand horse at a good pace.

"That's a nice traveller," I remarked, nodding in the direction of the horse, and noting the long, easy stride.

"He is that same, sor. His sire was 'Stupendous,' Lord Loughton's cilibrated American trotter," answered the old man. Then added, respectfully, touching his hat, "This will be your first visit to the Castle, I think, Captain?"

The man was right, for it was the first time I had ever been in Ireland. I had now come to see a little cousin of mine, who, six years ago, soon after I had exchanged into an Indian Regiment, had made the Green Isle her home, when she married a good-natured, fiery-haired giant of an Irishman, named Maurice O'Connoll, the present owner of Killman Castle.

This was the first time since Betty's marriage that I had come home for leave, and one of the waiting letters I found on my arrival in London, was from her, ordering me—in her well-remembered style—to pack up my guns, golf-clubs, and hunting kit, and to come "at once" to Killman, prepared to take up my abode in Ireland.

"I've got a delightful Irish girl for you, with delightful dimples, and a delightful *dôt*—that last a rarity nowadays in this distressful country, let me tell you! So make up your mind to be ready for the worst," Betty wrote; but I needed no inducements of "dimples" or "dôts," for after my long spell in India, the idea of the Green Isle was attraction enough.

"You've been with the O'Connoll's some time, I suppose?" I asked my ancient Jehu—he had the air and manners of a confidential servant.

“Wid the masther, and the ould man before him, sor. I drove the masther to his christenin’, an’ I drove him an’ the misthress home when he first brought her from England, an’, plase God, I’ll live to drive thim to their funeral yit, for there’s years of work in this arrum.” He spoke in perfect good faith, with tones of the utmost devotion to “the masther,” whose early demise he thus anticipated.

“Shure, it was great divarshuns we had that time—when the masther married—bonfires an’ dancing, lashings of porther, and tasting of potheen, all through the night. It took me an’ the steward all our time to git the gintlemen, who had taken a sup too much, safe out of the ring before the family was up the next morning.”

“Killman is a very old place, I think?”

“’Tis that same, sor, an’ none older round these parts at all, at all. There’s been many a bloody battle fought near by, an’ for that matther, there’s one livin’ now as was hid in the Castle when the Ribbon Boys—God rest their sows—were about.

“You’ve had wild times enough in Ireland often,” I said, encouragingly, hoping to get him to talk freely. He needed little inducing, and continued—

“That’s a fact, sor. ’Tis often I’ve heard of my gran’father’s gran’father, an’ his doings wid the Wild Captain O’Connoll. I can just remind me of my gran’father’s telling us the tales—him an ould, ould man, no one knew what age—just as his gran’father tould them to himself. There’s one sthory—but belike I’m wearing you wid my talk, sor?”

I reassured him, and smacking his lips with anticipation of the pleasure he felt in thus giving free rein to the loquacity of his race, he started again cheerfully.

“Well, sor, they do say that the Wild Irish had besieged the Cassle, and were afther burning the O’Moore’s house up beyant the Knockganoc. The Wild Captain an’ his Yeomen—he had a troop three hundred strong, which did more against the Rapparrees than all the King’s soldiers put together—was shut up tight in

the Castle, wid three or four thousand of the mountain men camped round in the plain. The Maw Goughlin was commanding the Rapparrees, a mighty robber chief he was, an' him an' the Wild Captain had many a grudge to sittle whin the saints brought thim together. Well, whin the Wild Captain heard that the Maw had burnt the O'Moore's house over his head, an' killed th' ould man, an' more too, taking Miss Diana O'Moore a prisoner, the Captain wint mad wid rage—for by that token he was thinkin' that the Lily of Ossory, as Miss O'Moore was named—would have made a wife for himself. 'Twas said her father had a power of goulden guineas and precious stones, hid up in a big brass pot, for a marriage gift for her.

“So by this an' that the Captain fairly was rale wild, an' he rushed to where his Yeomen were feasting an' cried out aloud—

“‘Who will risk his life wid me to save the Lily of Ossory?’

“Wid a shout you could hear at the Slieve Blooms, every man answered him—

“‘’Tis meself will!’

“The Wild Captain smiled—and they did be saying a dozen Rapparrees had betther be savin' their sowl, whin-ever he smiled—

“‘Come thin,’ he says, an' the gates were opened an' they rode out an' fought the Irishers all the day, slaughtering frightful!

“But though they killed an' killed, an' though the Wild Captain's grey horse came home crimson to the saddle-flaps, not one sight did they git of the Lily of Ossory, before the twilight came on. So they turned sorrowful into the Cassle.

“The Wild Captain ate no mate, but sat wid his head bint, not one daring to pass the time o' day wid him.

“At last he sint for my gran'father's gran'father.

“‘Teighe,’ says he, ‘will ye come to the gates of hell wid me?’

“‘I will that same,’ says my gran'father's gran'father, ‘and that skippin’.’

“ ‘Thin git the clothes off two of them carrion, an’ be quick.’

“ ‘So the other he got two set of the mountain men’s clothes, an’ the two of them put them on, an’ disguised themselves as strolling beggars, one wid pipes an’ the other wid a fiddle. Thin they left the Cassle unbeknownst to any one but a sintry.

“ ‘Teighe,’ says the Wild Captain, ‘if the Rapparrees dishcover us we’re dead men.’

“ ‘They’ll kill us for cartain,’ agrees my gran’father’s gran’father, ‘an’ more times than not roast us alive, when we’re dead first.’

“ ‘They’ll be apt to be thousands to one agin us.’

“ ‘Or more, Captain, the Lord be praised!’

“ ‘Teighe, ye can go back now, and not one sowl think the worse of ye.’

“ ‘Shure ye know I’d die for you, Captain dear, an’ if it’s hell you’re bound for, it’s meself will be thare first, wid the door open for yer honour.’

“ ‘So no more passed between them until they reached the mountains.

“ ‘It’s Irish we’ll spake,’ whispered the Captain, whin they saw the light of the ribbel fires. Thin they hailed the sintry in Irish, telling him they had escaped the English, an’ soon both were warmin’ their hands to the fire an’ ateing from the big pot that hung over that same.

“ ‘After supper, they played an’ sang ribil songs and ould haythenish Irish tunes, an’ my gran’father’s gran’father said the Wild Captain made his fiddle spake; whilst himself, he put his sowl into the pipes, until the mountain men wint wild wid delight at the grand tunes of them.

“ ‘It’s to the Maw they must play,’ the ribils cried, an’ soon the two was led further up into the mountains, where the Maw and fourteen of his chieftains sat—an’ there right in the middle of the ribil lot, wid her two preety hands and her two little fate tied wid a coarse bit of rope, lay the Lily of Ossory, safe enough.

“ ‘Then the two played and sung to the Maw, until he grew tired and felt like slapeing.

“ ‘Tis well you're here,' says the Maw, 'Ye will play at my widding to-morra,' an' he grinned as he looked at the prisoner.

“ ‘We will that same, an' dance too,' cried the Wild Captain, smiling up in his face.

“ ‘Twill be the English will dance,' growled the Maw, 'wid no ground under their feet. I'll make hares of them the day.'

“ An' wid this he tould thim how 'twas all planned to surprise the Cassle at the break o' day, an' how one of the most trusted of the Yeomen had agreed to open a door where he would be sintry, in exchange for Mr. O'Moore's pot of gould and treasure.

“ ‘Tis a foine skame,' cried the Wild Captain, 'an' worthy of the Maw Goughlin. But if it's for the break o'day, shure 'tis slape you best be gettin', for it's only five hours off the dawning now.'

“ So they all lay round the fires to slape—the Maw an' the fourteen of his chiefs and the two beggars round the one fire, an' the rest of the army a little dishtance off.

“ The fires died down a bit, and barring a sob or two from the Lily of Ossory, nothing stirred or spoke.

“ Thin my gran'father's gran'father felt a long knife thrust by his hand, an' the Wild Captain whispered to him—

“ ‘Split their throats from ear to ear, that they may not cry out. Cut deep.'

“ Slowly the two of them crept around, pausing at each slapeing Rapparree, an' littin' his ribil blood flow out on the grass.

“ Not one of the fifteen as much as turned over; the Captain killed eight an' the Maw, an' my gran'father's gran'father killed the rest.

“ ‘Be silint, Diana, me darlint,' whispered the Wild Captain to the Lily of Ossory. 'We've come to save you.' Wid that he cut the ropes that bound her, an' telling her to follow him, he crept out of the firelight, she after him, an' my gran'father's gran'father lasht of all.

“ The Captain he knew every fut of them mountains, so did me gran'father's gran'father, and skirtin' round the



Rapparrees' camp, they reached the Cassle in safety. You may be sure, sor, it wasn't long before the Captain had his Yeomen out, and they attacked the ribils still sleepin' in their camp, an' slaughtered a thousand or more before the sun was well up."

"But what became of the treacherous sentry?" I asked.

"Shure he danced—in the air—at the Wild Captain's widding with Miss O'Moore."

"And what became of the pot of treasure?"

"Shure the Captain he took that wid his lady, an' they do say——"

"Well?"

"Ah!—it's only the country talk, yer honour, but they do say the crock of gould is buried somewhere in or near the Cassle. Ye see, it fell out this way; the Wild Captain and the English King didn't agree about some little matther—'twas about some wan called a Pretinder, I believe—an' the English King sint the redcoats to besiege the Cassle. Now the Cassle has a long underground passage between it an' a rath on the hill near by. In this rath,\* all the cattle an' bastes were kept, an' driven down the passage whin they were wanted. Well, the redcoats dug an' found the passage an' stopped it up wid big rocks an' such like, so they in the Cassle had ne'er a bit or sup for three days. Then the Wild Captain in the night he called two serving men, and says he to them—

"'Help me to carry this ould crock of butter.'

"But what he called the crock of butter was the big brass pot full of gould and jewils. 'Twas as much as the three could do to carry it. So whin they got to the shpot the Wild Captain had chosen, they dug a hole an' buried it. Then they all three wint together to the top of the Cassle to look at the English lights below them.

"'Fergus,' says the Wild Captain to wan of the serving men, 'go down an' bring me my sword from my room; 'tis meself will test it afore to-morrow's battle.' "

\* Ancient Danish earthworks—an outer and inner ring and underground stone chamber.



"So Fergus he wint. Thin the Wild Captain he says to the other, 'Kiernan, do ye remimber where we hid the ould crock o' butter?'"

"'I do, O'Connoll,' says Kiernan, 'twas there an' there we put the gould.'"

"'May your sowl rist wid it,' says the Wild Captain, an' wid that he knocked him over the edge of the battlements an' on to his skull on the top of the English red-coats on the stones below.

"When Fergus brought up the sword the Wild Captain made pretence of trying the edge wid his finger.

"'Are ye sure ye sharpened it well?' says he.

"'I am,' answers Fergus.

"'Thin may it sind your sowl to Paradise this minute,' an' wid that he chops off the head of him an' throws him over the walls too.

"Thin the Wild Captain, rather than die like a rat in a hole, giv himself up, an' they took him to Dublin, and condemned him, along with Sir William O'Brien—a grand gintleman livin' sivin miles beyant—to be hung, drawn and quartered for treason."

"What an ignominious ending for Captain O'Connoll," I observed.

"Oh! they did not hang him, sor; the King was frightened when all was said an' done, so both gintlemin were pardoned. But they had put such heavy irons on the Captain's legs, that he never could walk again, and he died away, not clare in his mind. Whin he lay dyin' he towld the sthory of the gould to ease his sowl, but no one could ever find the place he meant, tho' they dug, an' dug, an' dug. Ah, but it's just a sthory! There sor, now we can see the Cassle," pointing with his whip to a grey square tower showing over the tops of the leafless trees.

Killman Castle was a sombre-looking bare building, consisting of a square keep tapering slightly to the top, looking in its grim grey strength, as if it could defy time itself. Flanking it on each side were wings of more modern build, and beyond one wing was a curious rambling looking house, which my driver told me was called

"The Priest's House," and which evidently had at one time been quite apart from the Castle, though now part and parcel of the house, being connected by one of the wings.

Even the trees round seemed to grow in gaunt, weird shapes, probably because their tops caught the full blast of the wind, and their branches creaked and groaned above our heads as we passed under their overhanging shadows.

The gateway was castellated and overgrown with lichens and creepers, and the drive bordered with ancient walls, beyond them the ruins of other old walls or buildings, all overgrown and covered with moss and ferns. Even the topmost branches of the big sycamores were decorated with these same ferns, which grew in endless profusion in every nick and corner.

"'Twill be a wild night," my driver remarked, pointing to the murky red sky showing through the trees. As he spoke, a loud mournful cry sounded above us and was repeated three times.

I started at the first cry, then laughed at myself, for I quickly recognised the noise to be the call of the hoot owl. Often enough had I heard these birds in India and seen my native servants cower panic-stricken, for in the East the cry of an owl is regarded as the token of coming death to one of the hearers.

"That's a loud voiced customer," I said, laughing. "Are there many of his feather round here?"

"No, Captain; we never had but that one of scrache-ing kind. He was here all the summer, an' now the winter do be comin' on, he's spoiling the thrade of the little sheebeen beyant at the cross-roads by the same token."

"How on earth can an owl spoil the trade of a public house?"

"'Tis the mountain min mostly, sor, goes there, an' ne'er a mother's son of them will put fut outside their cabins afther dark since that gentlemine in the ivy has been hooting. They mountain fellars be rale skeared, for they do be believin' in pishrogues \* an' such like, an'

\* Fairy spells.

they do be sayin' 'tis an evil spirit keening for a sowl that will die near by. There have been a power o' wakes lately—what wid the influenzy, an' the ould folks been pinched wid the cowld—in a good hour be it spoken! Here we are, sor."

A bright light shone through the opened door, and in the warm welcome that Betty and her good man gave me I forgot the bleak night, the hooting owl, and the traditions the voluble Milesian groom had been telling me.

The interior of Killman Castle is quite in keeping with its weather-worn outer walls.

I may as well describe it now, though it was not until the next morning that I went over the place with Maurice O'Connell.

The entrance hall is very lofty, with a gallery running round three sides, and is paved with black and white stones. The walls are pierced—evidently long after they were originally built—by archways leading into the two wings, and are twenty feet thick. They are honeycombed with narrow passages, and at two corners of the tower are circular stone staircases, fine bits of rough hewn masonry, each wedge-shaped step resting on its fellows—both staircases are as perfect as the day they were built. It was curious to me to note how the inner axles of these winding ladder-like stairs have had the blackened stones polished smooth and bright by the many generations of hands that have pressed against them, as their owners ran up and down these primitive ways.

O'Connell told me that tradition states that the Castle was originally built by the Irish for the Danes, who seemed to have extracted forced labour from the half-clad barbarians before Ireland was fully Christianised. The story whispered by the country folk declares that the mortar used in its construction was made in a great measure with human blood and human hair, and that therefore it has withstood the ravages of time. Somewhere about the year 800 the Irish, under the leadership of a chieftain named O'Connell, rose against their oppressors, and took possession of the Castle, where

O'Connell established himself and soon became a powerful prince. His descendants inhabited this Castle, whether the original building, or a more modern one built of the materials and on the site of the old one, history does not reveal ; and until the advent of the English in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this stronghold was considered impregnable. Amongst the first of the English adventurers was a young squire—son of an English knight—who hoped to win his spurs at the expense of the wild Irish. The expedition he was attached to attracted by the rumour of the O'Connell's riches, besieged the Castle, and in a sortie the defenders made, the young squire was taken prisoner. He was confined in a little room off one of the staircases, and as all the Irish were very busy defending the Castle, the only daughter of the house, one Finnueguolla O'Connell, was deputed to push what food they allowed the prisoner, through a little hole in the walls of his dungeon.

The Englishman made the best use of his opportunity, and by judiciously tender speeches, he succeeded in winning the maiden so completely to his side, that one day, with a view of abetting his escape, she procured the key of the prison and let him out. As he was running down the twisting staircase, he met young O'Connell, the girl's only brother, coming up, who immediately raised a hue and cry. The escaping prisoner turned and fled upward, eventually coming out on to the battlements of the tower. Seeing that flight any other way was impossible, and preferring the risk of sudden death to the more lingering one his attempted escape would ensure him, were he to be recaptured, he gave a mighty jump over the parapet, and managed to find refuge, and not death, in the branches of a yew tree growing near the walls, reaching his countrymen safely.

Eventually, his rather treacherous lover betrayed the Castle to the English ; its inhabitants were all hung in a field—called to this day “The Hangman's Field”—and the English squire married Finnueguolla, taking her name and the lands of her father by right of marriage and conquest.

Their son, Maurice O'Connoll, was one of the first high sheriffs appointed in Ireland, and his tomb, dated 1601, is still to be seen in the little churchyard near Killman.

The tower had originally five floors or stories; of these three exist—the first, a big bricked-up room, under the present hall; then the hall itself; and at the top of the tower a large chapel, with a fine east window and stone altar.

Besides the bricked-up room under the hall, are dungeons hollowed out of the rock itself, with no windows or communication to the outer air, and some of which O'Connoll now used as wine cellars. In a corner of the chapel is an "oubliette," where disagreeable strangers were invited to walk down two steps on to a hinged platform, that let them fall below the level of the deepest dungeon, where pointed stakes helped to give them a quick journey to the nether world.

"A couple of cartloads of old bones and bone dust were cleared out of that," my host told me, "and buried with due ceremony in the churchyard by some superstitious old ancestor of mine. Amongst others who were said to have been thrown down there was a priest, the brother of a far-back O'Connoll, who offended the reigning head of the family by beginning mass here one day without him. That particular prince was a beauty—one of his little games was getting a hundred and fifty mercenaries to help him fight the English, and when the enemy were beaten off, to avoid paying his hired friends, he treated them all to a poisoned feast in the hall here, and killed the whole lot! See these skulls and bits of bones? They came out of the wall when we made a new window. The idea is, that when this place was besieged, the garrison had no way of burying their dead, so they cemented the bodies up in the walls. That's one explanation; the other is the penny plain, twopence coloured, 'walled up' alive business. You can pay your money and take your choice. Here, anyhow, are the skulls and bones that came *out* of the wall; I don't trouble my head how they got *in* there."



This rambling description will, I hope, give some idea of the environment of this story, and form the outlines of a mental picture of the quaint old place, which has been inhabited without a break for at least a thousand years.

As for the legends and stories belonging to it, their name is legion—all telling of love, murder, and rapine, as such mediæval traditions are always wont to run.

My first evening at Killman passed very quickly and pleasantly. Betty and I yarned over old times, and then she got out her banjo, and we sang reminiscent nigger ditties appropriate to that unmusical instrument, in the same dear old discordant style that we had sung them years ago.

“Oh! Kenneth, do you remember the night before you sailed, when we sang ‘Love to Nancy’?” said Betty, idly strumming the catchy air she mentioned.

“I remember it,” growled Maurice, a smile lurking under his moustache. “Enough to make any man laugh, to see a set of sane people, with eyes like boiled gooseberries from crying, and nearly speechless from the excessive sentiment of a banjo song! But look here, Betty, Kenneth had no sleep last night, so we must pack him off early to-night. It’s getting late—half-past eleven. There go the dogs!”

As he spoke, the baying of many dogs, “of high and low degree,” broke into a noisy chorus, rising to a crescendo of angry fear, and then dying down into a pianissimo of canine woe.

The big deerhound, Oscar, who was lying on a sheepskin rug in the hall, added a long, deep note of misery to the general orchestra.

“Do those dogs see the moon?” I asked. “What a curious noise they make!”

“There isn’t a moon to-night,” O’Connell answered. “But the dogs here always do that. It’s one of their little ways that won’t bear explaining. They mark half-past eleven without fail; we can set the clocks by them.”

“Probably some shadow in the trees at that time,” I hazarded.

"So I thought, and we shifted them to the other side of the place, but it was just the same over there. No, don't ask Betty about it, or she'll keep you up all night telling some cock-and-bull ghost story if you do. Now, once more, *will* you go to bed, Betty? Think of that poor 'divil' of a maid waiting up for you all this time. Have a whiskey and soda, Gordon, before turning in?"

Whilst we were consuming the wine of the country I asked O'Connell if he knew of any ghost story connected with the Castle.

He looked at me curiously, and then laughed.

"A ghost? We've only a couple of dozen or more, my dear fellow. But surely you are not the cut of Spooky Believer? Don't tell me you take a 'Julia' or such like familiar about with you!"

It was my turn to laugh now. My host continued—

"I've been here all my life, often quite alone, and never have I seen what I can't quite explain to myself by natural causes—electricity, ycu know, and all that. Of course, there are noises enough, but what old house is free from them? It's only rats in a great measure. What I say is, that the only spirits about, arise from the too liberal consumption of this spirit," he tapped the tantalus stand. "The servants get drinking—we've an old cook now who'd see you under the table, but her omelettes cover a multitude of sins—and then they kick up a row themselves, get frightened, swear they see ghosts, and clear off in a body next day. If anything makes me really mad, it's the rot people talk about spirits and apparitions in this house."

"What says Betty to all the things? Of course, she is much too hard-headed to listen to such folly, isn't she?"

"Of all the women in the world, one would swear that of her, and yet—" he pulled angrily at his pipe and enveloped himself in a cloud of smoke—"she got some idiotic maggot in her brain last year, and has turned ever since as nervous as a cat. It's too bad of her—I did think she had some common sense—that was why I married her," this with the sublime disregard of any sentimentality common to Benedicts of some years



standing. "Just now she has been worrying my life out, trying to get me to go away for this month—it is in November most of these mysterious follies are said to appear, because the nights are dark, I expect! Now Betty would die sooner than go upstairs or be left alone at night. It's too provoking of her—I wish you'd chaff her into common sense again."

Betty afraid of ghosts!

Betty nervous!

I did not believe it for a minute! She was certainly playing some deep-laid practical joke upon her husband. I mutely determined to be wary of turnip-headed bogies and booby traps, for Betty occasionally had fits of such childish follies.

We went up the broad oaken staircase in one of the wings, and then along the gallery overlooking the hall.

A funny little doorway in the wall, about the height of my shoulders, raised my curiosity; Maurice O'Connoll, taking advantage of his six feet and odd inches, pulled it open to show me the winding narrow staircase it concealed. A rush of cold air nearly put our lights out, and he hastily pushed the door to, which seemed very heavy.

"It's all iron-plated," he explained. "In the Rebellion of '98, the family, and, in fact, all the Protestants of the neighbourhood, took refuge in there. However, I won't begin telling you the legends; Betty is the best hand. I say if she does not know an appropriate story, she invents one on the spot."

With this parting libel on poor Betty's veracity, he showed me my room, and after seeing I had everything I needed, he departed.

My room was a long narrow one, with a fireplace across one corner. The floor was of polished poplar, with a couple of rugs on it. To my delight I saw that instead of the ordinary heavy-curtained bedstead one would picture as appropriate to the house, there was one of modern make, with a wire-wove mattress.

I locked my door as a precautionary measure against bogies—or practical joking—and began leisurely to divest

myself of my clothes ; then I became conscious of some-one breathing heavily somewhere in the room.

"Hullo," I thought, "here is a hospitable spook manifesting at once for the credit of the house."

Then O'Connell's remarks about the servant and whiskey came back to me. Horrors! If it was the bibulous cook!

The breathing was now snoring, and came unmistakably from under the bed.

Seizing the poker I gave a vicious sweep under the bed, abjuring the snorer to "come out at once."

There was a patter of feet, and out crept an obese and aged fox terrier of the feminine persuasion, showing her few remaining front teeth in an apologetic grin, and agitating her minimum of tail with cringing affability,

As the old lady seemed an amiable specimen of her race, and apparently had been recently washed with carbolic soap, I determined to allow her to be my guest for the night, even if she was self-invited. So I threw her my rug, which she proceeded to make into a bed for herself in a corner near the fireplace, scratching and turning round and round, and finally, with a grunt of satisfaction, curling into a ball, watching my toilet operations with brazen effrontery, and wagging her tail whenever she caught my eye.

I placed a box of matches and a candle by my bedside, and it was not long before we were both asleep, my last recollection being the sound of the dog's stertorous breathing—then a blissful, dreamless unconsciousness came over me.

A cold nose against my cheek, and two long-nailed fore-paws vigorously scratching to get *into* my bed, awakened me quite suddenly, and I found my friend the fox-terrier standing on my chest, trembling most violently, and whining in a distressed fashion.

"You ungrateful little brute," I said angrily, giving her a far from gentle push on to the floor, but in a second she was up again, doing her best to get under the bed-clothes.

"Not if I know it," and again I sent her flying. The

room was quite dark, and as the fire had been pretty bright when I went to bed, I guessed I had been sleeping some time.

Thoroughly enraged when the dog jumped up for the third time, I threw her roughly down, and this time I heard her patter under the bed and creep into the farthest corner, where she sat trembling so violently that she shook my bed.

By this time I was thoroughly awake, and fearing I had hurt the dog, I put my hand out of bed, snapping my fingers to call her and make my *amende*.

My hand was suddenly taken into the grasp of another hand, a soft, cool hand, at a temperature perceptibly below my own flesh.

To say that I was astonished would but mildly convey my feelings! After a few seconds of steady pressure the other hand let go, and almost simultaneously I heard a heavy sliding fall, like the collapse of a large body at the foot of my bed. Then in the absolute stillness of the room there sounded a deep human groan, and some half articulated words.

“Holy Jes—s!”

The voice—if it could be called a voice—died away into another groan; the dog under my bed gave a sharp hoarse bark, and scratched and tore at the wainscoting. Fully convinced that someone in trouble of some sort had got access to my room—by what method I could not imagine—I struck a match and lit my candle, springing from the bed and crying out, “Who’s there? What is it?”

My eyes blinked for a little at the sudden light, but when they were steady I looked to the spot where I had heard the groan, but there was no one.

The room was absolutely empty, and exactly as I had left it on going to bed. Nothing was out of order, nothing was moved, and there was nothing I could see to account for the noises I had heard.

To make certain I tried the door. It was still locked. I made a tour of inspection round the walls, which were painted, not papered, looked under all the

furniture, and finally kneeling at the foot of the bed, held my candle so as to be able to look underneath.

In the corner crouched the fox-terrier but there was nothing else. The polished boards reflected the light of my candle, and perfectly mystified I was getting up, when I felt the hand I had been resting on the floor was damp.

I held it close to the light, and saw my finger tips and the ball of my thumb were reddened as if with blood, and turning back the rug I discovered a dark stain extending perhaps for two feet one way, and three or four the other.

Instinctively I looked at the ceiling, but its whitewashed surface showed no corresponding mark. Nothing had dropped from above. The stain was damp, not wet, and yet felt warm as though the fluid, whatever it was, had been recently spilt. I examined my finger tips again, the marks were very like blood. Bah! I dabbled my hand in the water in my basin rather hurriedly, then I once more went carefully round the room.

The shutters were barred, the door was locked, there was no cupboard in the wall, and the chimney was still hot from the fire. I tapped the walls carefully and could find no indication of any hollow place that *might* possibly be a secret door, but as I did so my common sense revolted at my own folly—they were so innocent of any panellings or dadoes that could conceal an exit.

If a practical joke had been played upon me, where had the delinquent vanished to?

One hypothesis alone was possible, and that I indignantly rejected, for I *knew* I was wide awake in my sober sense and not the victim of delusion or waking nightmare.

For a minute I contemplated writing the whole thing down there and then, but the absurdity of the matter flashed across my mind. I looked at my watch and found it was nearly three o'clock. It was better to warm my shivering limbs in bed than chill myself further by writing what no one would believe, for after all I had *seen* nothing, and who would credit groans and whispered words without one particle of corroborative evidence? The

fox-terrier's "mark" to the important document would not enhance its value in the eyes of the Psychical Research Society or incredulous Mr. Stead.

So I crept back to my nest, first enticing the little dog from her corner, and in a half-acknowledged wish for company, even if it was only that of a beast, I took her into bed with me.

I left the candle burning for a short time, then as there were no further noises I put it out, and prepared once more to woo the drowsy god, and falling asleep was not disturbed again.

When I had finished dressing the next morning I—curious to see what was there—turned back the rug at the foot of the bed. Sure enough I found the dark stain, just as I had seen it in the night, with this difference—it was no longer wet, but appeared of long standing.

We were to shoot some home coverts that day, and besides ourselves O'Connell expected six guns, neighbours some, and a sprinkling of officers from the nearest garrison. Betty too took me on one side and told me that her friend of the dimples and dôt was coming, and that I was to be *sure* and not let "dear" Captain Adair monopolise the young woman's attention, but that I was to "go in and win."

Miss "Dimples" arrived, also "dear" Captain Adair, a tall, dark ruffian who had basely forestalled me by getting the pretty little lady in question to drive him out. I found this warrior was a universal favourite, O'Connell declaring that he was "one of the *few* decent soldiers" he knew; whilst Betty—well, Betty was sickening!

Adair and I were told off to a warm corner, where to my great joy I wiped his eye over a woodcock. He grassed two long-tails that I missed in an unaccountable manner to be sure, but everyone knows one woodcock is of more value than many pheasants.

We had a capital day's sport, plenty of walking, and a most varied if not very big bag, as there were birds of all feathers about. As for the rabbits, the whole place walked with them, as one of the keepers said, they were indeed a "fright."



Betty and the Dimpled Damsel lunched with us, and followed the guns in the afternoon. Miss Dimples would have none of me, but tripped gaily after the all-conquering Captain Adair, so Betty took pity on me.

"Did you sleep all right, *really*, Kenneth, last night?" Betty asked me anxiously as we walked along together.

"Don't you think it likely?" I answered, looking hard at her. "Of course I did, all the same. But if it is convenient, may I be moved into a room facing west? My present quarters face east you know, and I never sleep really well that way."

I knew as I uttered the words, that the excuse sounded thin and forced. It did not deceive Betty for an instant.

"Then you *did* see something," she said in a low voice with a deep sigh.

"Not a thing," I answered, cheerfully.

"Don't try to humbug me, Kenneth; I know you so well that it is impossible."

"'Honest Injun!' Betty, never one little ghostie on a postie did I behold." I spoke laughingly—the night was far off still. "But, to be strictly truthful, I did think I *heard* a groan or two, and though it probably was only my fancy, I would much rather not hear them again! By the way, is there any story connected with that room, anything to do with that stain on the floor?"

I saw her colour under my watchful eyes.

"Maurice said nothing to you about it, then?"

I shook my head.

"Well, people have complained before—in fact, we don't generally put anyone there now. The room is called the Muckle or Murder Hole room, and the story goes that the stain on the floor is the blood of a man stabbed there by his brother. Two O'Connolls quarrelled over the ownership of the Castle, and fought, and the dying brother cursed the other, praying that no eldest son should inherit direct from his father. Maurice succeeded his grandfather, you know, and even he had an elder brother. I believe the curse has always been

fulfilled. The room has been disused for fifty years or more when we did it up. The stain has been planed off the boards several times, but it always comes again—creeps up from below in a few hours ; no one knows how. Maurice won't believe in any of these stories, having heard them all the days of his life. He declares that one person tells another, and then, nervous to begin with, of course they imagine a ghost. So, when you were coming, he insisted on your being put in there, for he said *you* could not be prejudiced by any nonsense, and that we would be able to prove what folly it all was."

I do not know that I altogether appreciated O'Connell's kind experiment at my expense. However, I laughed, and told Betty he was quite right, as no better man could be chosen to "lay" the ghosts.

"I'll have you moved to-night," Betty continued. "Don't tell me what you saw." I made a movement of protest. "Or heard—for Kenneth, don't laugh at me ; but though I hate myself for my folly, I am often more nervous than I can say."

"*You* nervous, Betty ! *You* who got that knife away from the mad girl, when her nurses were afraid to go into the room. *You* who——"

She interrupted me quickly—

"That's all different ; I can't explain it. The only description that at all comes near the feeling is somewhere in the Bible, where it speaks of one's heart becoming water. I never felt the least fear when I came here, though, of course, I heard all kinds of stories, and have had all through endless trouble with servants leaving at a moment's notice, frightened into fits. When people staying here said they saw things I only laughed, and declared it was mere nonsense, and though we've always had quite unexplainable noises, such as the great chains of the front door being banged up the staircase and along the gallery, and endless footsteps, and sighing and cries, and rustlings and taps—they *never* frightened me. Even when sudden lights and tongues of flame, and letters of fire on the walls, came many times, both of us saw them, for Maurice *did* see them,



too, though he hates to own it—I was only curious and annoyed because I could not explain it satisfactorily to myself. But, Kenneth, a year ago—last November—I saw ‘It,’ and I have never felt the same about these things since, or ever shall again.”

“November is the height of the season in your Spooks’ society?” I asked lightly, trying to cheer poor, serious Betty.

“Yes, nearly all the stories are about that month, though odd spirits appear all through the year. It’s in November that there is said to be the vision of a dead troop of soldiers, drilling in the ring.”

“What are your stock apparitions?”

“There are so many, I don’t remember them always, but I will try and recall what have been seen within the last six years. First, of course, there is a Banshee. She sits on the terrace, and keens for coming deaths in the family. Then there is Earl Desmond’s ghost, who howls in a chimney, where he was hiding and got smothered. A monk, with tonsure and cowl, walks in at one window and out at another, in the priests’ house—that is the wing beyond the blue room, where I sleep now. He has been seen by three people to my own knowledge, not servants; for, of course, *their* stories are endless, and require more than a grain of salt. Then a little old man, with green cut-away coat, knee breeches, stockings, and bright shoe buckles, holding a leathern bag in his hand. Quite a dozen people have seen him. Sometimes he is all alone, sometimes a little old woman to match him is there, with skinny hands, long black mitts, old-fashioned dress, and a big head-dress, so they describe her. My mother saw them; and a third figure, an old man, dressed like a priest, with an intensely cunning face. She saw all three together several times.”

“Do these ghosts do any harm, or talk to you, or anything like that?”

“The green old man tries to stop people, but no one has been brave enough to interview him yet. Then, in the priests’ house, comes a burly man, in rough clothes,

like a peasant ; he pushes a heavy barrel up the back stairs of that wing, near the servants' bedrooms, and when just at the top, the barrel rolls down, bump, bump, bump—a fearful noise, and all disappear.”

I fear I laughed heartily at this inconsequent ghost ; but Betty went on, unmoved—

“ Then there is a woman, with very few clothes, and a red cloth over her face ; she screams loudly twice, and disappears. That is on the same landing as the barrel man. These have been seen by numberless servants, and——”

“ My dearest Betty, do you mean to say you believe old wives' tales, told by the common or garden domestic ? ”

“ No, I don't,” said Betty, candidly. “ I don't mind about these one bit. I tell you, because I am trying to give a full catalogue of all who have been said to appear in my married life here.”

“ Go on, my dear.”

“ Then,” resumes Betty, “ there is a tall, dark woman, in the historical rustling silk dress. She haunts any room where there are children, and sobs at the foot of their beds. My last nurse and two or three maids have seen her. Her story is that she was a poor soul, one of the O'Connolls kidnapped, and that she had an infant soon after she was brought into the Castle, which O'Connoll threatened to kill if she would not marry him, and that when she had yielded to him, he piked the child before her eyes, saying she could not look after him and the baby at the same time. They found her hanging next day, having killed herself.”

“ What nice, cheerful little ways the O'Connolls seem to have had.”

“ They were simply robber chieftains, and robbed and murdered without compunction,” said Betty. “ Then there is a scene on the gallery, seen once in my day, and several times in past generations. Some time in back ages there was a beautiful girl, the daughter of a squireen, that two of the O'Connoll men were attached to. Both tried to abduct her—one successfully. The

other, returning angry and disappointed to the Castle, found the girl was already within its walls. A violent quarrel ensued between the two men, in the middle of which the girl escaped from the room in which they all three were, and ran, shrieking, along the gallery. 'Let him who catches her keep her,' shouted one man, as they both started in pursuit. The original abductor caught her first, and, with a cry of triumph, lifted her in his arms.

" 'Keep her then,' cried the other—but as he spoke he ran his dagger twice through her back and killed her. The whole scene is re-enacted in the gallery."

Betty related this pleasing legend with much spirit.

"Oh, Betty," I cried, "do say there is a blue light. That story is nothing without a blue light."

"I don't know if the light is blue," she answered simply. "But the Keep is lighted up when this apparition is seen, for a minute. When the girl is stabbed everything disappears. I have *seen* the Keep lighted up myself—once."

"How? When? And where?"

"Driving home from a day's hunting at the other end of the county—two girls who were staying here and myself. We were very late, and it was so dark I had to walk the horse up the avenue. When within sight of the Castle, I could see the yellow light of the lamps shining through the cracks of the shutters in the wing and from the hall. Of course, as it always is, the rest of the tower was in darkness. Quite suddenly there was a brilliant stream of white light from all the windows and arrow-slits in the Keep—from the big chapel windows and all. I had just time to exclaim 'Oh! look at the light,' when it went out just as suddenly."

"Someone taking a look round the place with a torch or something," I hazarded.

"No one would venture up the winding stairs to the chapel at that hour, I can tell you! Besides, I *know* no earthly light but electricity could produce the strong glare I saw."

"A sudden flash of lightning, probably."

“There was no thunder or sign of any. However, I never expect anyone to believe it. I *saw* it—that is enough for me.”

“You tried to find out an explanation?”

“Of course I did,” replied Betty, half crossly. “Do you think I *like* having that kind of thing happen in a place I am to live in for the rest of my natural life, and my children after me? There, Kenneth, I don’t mean to snap at you,” she smiled penitently. “But when people talk as if they thought you went out of your way to invent the very things that make life a burden, I *do* get annoyed. I *never* tell people these stories now, because they simply don’t believe one; or if they do, write one down a weak-minded, self-deceptive, backboneless idiot.”

“Betty, you *know* that I——”

“You are ‘Kenneth,’ and not ‘people.’ But to hark back to the ghostly inventory. There is something heavy that lies on people’s beds, and snores, and they feel the weight of a great body pressing against them, but see nothing. No one, to my knowledge, has *seen* this, only heard and felt it. Then there is something that very young children and dogs and cats see, but no one else. Fortunately, as the children grow out of babyhood they seem to lose the power of seeing this thing—my babies have seen it when too young to talk, and were sent precious nearly into convulsions. My cats go cracked, spit, claw, and run up the curtains, and the dogs—oh! it was only a day or two before you came that Maurice and I were in the smoking-room with four or five dogs, when, without rhyme or reason, they all dashed into the hall, barking furiously; then just as quickly they dashed back again, their coats bristling, their tails tucked between their legs, the picture of fright—old Oscar as bad as any of them. Maurice ran out, but could see nothing uncanny; but no amount of driving or coaxing would bring them out again—they crawled under chairs and sofas, shivering.”

“Could your husband make it out?”

“Not a bit. But that often happens. Those are all the ghosts I can remember in the house—except It. But

outside they swarm, and I am not surprised, for the whole neighbourhood was a veritable Armageddon. We cannot plough anywhere near without turning up skulls galore."

"Why don't you let the place to the Psychical Research people?" I suggested. "With such a delightful assortment of ghosts 'on tap,' they would be charmed to take it."

"I only wish Maurice would," said Betty. "or let someone come here and investigate. But like all Irishmen he adores every stone and blade of grass that belongs to him, and he won't hear of the place being uncanny in any way. Once a friend wanted to send a parson with book, bell, and candle, to 'lay' a ghost she saw, and Maurice was furious; and when I suggested inviting a man I know who is very clever at probing into those kind of things he would not hear of it! He gets so angry with the country folk when they refuse to come here after nightfall, and when they say the place is 'dark,' meaning bad. As for me he, thinks I am rapidly becoming fit for the nearest lunatic asylum, because I am in such deadly terror of ever seeing 'It' again."

"Would you mind telling me what you saw yourself, Betty? O'Connell told me you had had a fright."

"I'll tell you if you like, Kenneth, but of course you will find some plausible—and utterly impossible—'natural' explanation for it. Maurice says vaguely 'it was after dinner,' which is extra rude for I am, and always have been, strictly blue ribbon. Still, here are the facts.

I had a party for shooting here last November, amongst others my sister Grace and one of my brothers—Ted you know. Well, we had tramped with the men all day, so we turned up to bed early. I went the round of the girls' rooms, then got into my dressing-gown and had my hair brushed, after that I sent my maid off to bed. Maurice and I were the only inhabitants of the red wing, next the room you slept in last night—no one else that side of the tower. I heard a noise in the hall, so went out on to the landing and along the gallery and



looked over. There I saw Maurice putting out the lamps himself. He had a lighted candle in his hand, and was evidently just coming up to bed.

"Maurice," I called to him, "will you bring me the last *Review of Reviews* out of the drawing-room please? I want to read an article in it."

"'All right,' he called back, 'I am just coming up to bed.'

"He left one lamp burning, and went through into the drawing-room, whilst I, leaning my elbows on the corner of the gallery balustrade, waited for Maurice to re-appear. I recollect I was wondering what kind of sport I should have the next day when I was going to hunt with the Killgoran hounds.

"Suddenly, two hands were laid on my shoulders. I turned round sharply, and saw, as clearly as I see you now—a grey 'Thing,' standing a couple of feet from me, with its bent arms raised, as if it were cursing me. I can't describe in words how utterly awful the 'Thing' was, its very undefinableness rendering the horrible shadow more gruesome. Human in shape, a little shorter than I am, I could just make out the shade of great eyes and sharp features—but the whole figure, head, face, hands, and all, was grey—unclean, blueish grey, something of the colour and appearance of common cotton wool. But, oh! so sinister, repulsive, and devilish.

"My tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth, and I felt every hair on my head separate and move—then the spell was broken.

"I wheeled round—fortunately outwards—on to the open gallery, and with something—not myself—in my throat that shrieked continuously, I tore along the passage, down the stairs, through the corridor into the priests' house, where my sister was sleeping. Once in her room I nearly fainted; but, pulling myself together, I managed to make my husband and brother—who, hearing the shrieks, had flown to the rescue—understand that there was a 'Thing' in the gallery, which had frightened me. They ran up together, and searched carefully;

but, though they hunted up and down, they saw nothing."

Betty paused, and pressed her hand to her heart for a minute; then resumed—

"I soon got all right, though my teeth would not stop chattering for half-an-hour, and I told them quietly what I had seen. Maurice was dreadfully frightened at the time—now he declares I was hysterical, and that a cat jumped on my back!"

Betty had grown quite white as she related her adventure, but managed a smile at the word "hysterical."

"It *must* have been a trick, Betty!"

"Who could have played it on me, or who would be in that part of the house? I grant you it is *possible* some unknown enemy conceived the excellent plan of trying to frighten my few remaining wits away, but it's not very probable—and I who saw 'It'—oh! but what's the good of talking—I should like to explain it to my own satisfaction; but I can't. One thing I know, if ever I meet 'It' again I shall go stark, staring mad that minute. So, as I have no ambitions for Bedlam, I take every precaution to prevent such a fate overtaking me. I have forsaken that wing of the house, leaving those rooms for strong-minded people like you. Also, I make my maid sit in my room now until Maurice goes to his dressing-room. There Kenneth, I have told you, and doubtless you think me an infinite fool—but, oh! Kenneth, if you had only seen 'It'!"

"Be assured, Betty, if I do, I will put a .240 revolver bullet into the cotton wool, and make the funny jokers inside sorry for themselves—that's all!"

Our talk drifted into other channels, and by the time the gathering twilight sent us indoors to tea and hot cakes, I was no longer thinking of the galaxy of ghosts that Betty had trotted out for my benefit.

Betty and the "Admirable" Captain Adair sat after tea on the fender stool in front of the cheerful turf fire gossiping lazily, so Miss Dimples had perforce in default of better game, to pay a little attention to me, and by the time the dressing gong sounded we were discussing



mutual affinities, having reached this interesting conversational point by the chromatic scale of dancing, hunting, shooting, plays, books, religious beliefs (Miss Dimples would have been an aggressive Agnostic had she known how), first impressions, telepathy and palmistry (Miss Dimples told my fortune, making an amusing record founded upon the romances of a well-known military novel writer) thence to affinities; we agreed that the topic was not properly threshed out and should "be continued in our next."

I had been shifted I found on going up to dress, into a room next the Murder Hole chamber and thought my new, bright, big quarters a distinct improvement. The floor was carpeted, and looked respectable and comfortable, and not suggestive of blood stains and murders. I looked forward to a real sound sleep that night.

We spent a merry evening, Captain Adair, who was staying the night, sang us comic songs until we ached with laughter, and Miss "Dimples," smiling and fascinating, completed my subjection. Alas! I am not the owner, or ever likely to be, of those Dimples and that *dôt*.

We went out in a body to catch the half-past eleven ghost and to time the dogs. When we first neared the kennels there was a great deal of pleased sniffing and whining from the dogs, but, to the second correct, the wild howling began.

None of us could see what started the chorus, so that mystery remained unsolved, though we each tried our best to find plausible theories. After more songs, came whiskey—when the ladies had gone to bed—shouting nigger choruses is apt to make one thirsty. Then we turned upstairs to our respective rooms, my little friend the fox terrier, whose name I found to be 'Nell,' accompanying me again.

Tired out with the long tramp and sleepy from the extra glass of whiskey those thirsty songs were answerable for, I knew nothing from the time my head was on the pillow until the servant brought my bath water next morning.

## CHAPTER II.

MISS "DIMPLES" was a laggard at breakfast. Betty was just going in search of her, when the door opened and she came in. Her pretty rosy cheeks had lost their colour, and she looked quite pale and tired—as if she had not slept.

"What have you been doing?" O'Connell asked, with much severity. "Reading a trashy modern novel in bed, eh, young lady? Or, like that sensible wife of mine, interviewing a ghost?"

No one could accuse Miss "Dimples" of being pale now—she flushed painfully, a vivid scarlet.

Betty looked at her with troubled eyes, and O'Connell seeing the effect of his jesting words frowned wrathfully. I threw myself into the breach, talking fast and loud to my host as to the day's prospects.

When O'Connell, taking Adair with him, had departed after breakfast to consult with his steward—an ubiquitous treasure, whose duties ranged between buying the babies' boots and arranging the various shoots, Miss "Dimples" with many more blushes, broke the sad fact to her hostess that she was recalled home.

I was sorry for the poor child, for she was in an agony, between inventing a specious lie and not seeming in unseemly haste to quit her friend's roof.

"I am so sorry to go, dear Madam O'Connell," she said, with tell-tale flaming cheeks, "but I got a letter from mother this morning, saying she is not very well, and that she wants me to come home."

Betty did not believe this story, nor did I; but as a very strong motive was evidently behind the girl's many excuses, I resolved to try and extract the truth.

It was arranged that Miss "Dimples" should depart after lunch, and Betty, jingling a huge bunch of keys in a workmanlike fashion, started "housekeeping," telling her friend to amuse me for half-an-hour.

"You've been telling terrible tarra-diddles, Miss

"Dimples," I said, reprovingly, when we were alone, shaking a reproachful finger at the fair sinner. "You never had any letter this morning, but a very obvious bill forwarded on to you. I particularly noticed the blue envelope lying in solitary grandeur on your plate."

"If you did notice, you shouldn't have, and you are horribly rude to tell me to my face I tell stories. Those are Indian manners I presume; now *dear* Captain Adair——"

Miss "Dimples" pouted in a provokingly charming manner at me.

"We are not talking of Captain Adair—da——I should say, bless him!" I interrupted austerely, "but are discussing the infamous conduct of a little lady, who, having told several very inartistic fibs within the last five minutes—by the clock—now refuses to confess and receive absolution."

"Certainly I refuse, with *such* a Father Confessor!"

"You will not find a more sympathetic in all Ireland, including its garrison towns!"

An alarming glare from two heavily curtained eyes made me hasten to add:

"See, I am quite in the right attitude." I sank on my knees with my hands clasped. "Now Fair Ladye, in your mercy tell your devoted knight what wicked monster disturbed your rest, that I may rend it from limb to limb!"

"I wish you could," she answered with a frightened glance round. Then in more natural tones, "*Do* get up; don't be so silly. What would The O'Connoll think, if he came in? Don't be so silly!"

"People might imagine I was laying my heart at your feet. Shall I?"

"My shooting boots might hurt that valuable article." She placed *en evidence* an absurd travesty of a "broad soled" boot. I could have held the two on one hand. "There, the lace is untied, as you are in a convenient position, will you tie it for me please, Captain Gordon?"

"If I tie it so that it won't come undone again all day, will you tell me?"

The "shooting boot" was in my possession, so I was not adverse to parleying with the enemy.

"Will I tell you what?"

"All about everything!"

"What do you mean? You make me shudder with your sweeping questions. Good gracious, no!"

"Then I shall unlace your boot."

I began to carry out my threat.

"You are horrid! Do it up again at once, and when it's *quite* done, I *might* begin to think of telling you something."

Philandering over a minute shooting boot is very pleasant, but it was not business in this case, so with a smothered sigh I repaired the damage, and released the hostage, which disappeared to join its fellow under the leather-bound checkboard skirt Miss "Dimples" wore as appropriate to sport.

"Now sit down—no, not here—over in that chair. Well, first you must swear by—by your spurs, not to tell The O'Connoll."

"I swear it."

"Or ever in a horrid club smoking-room."

"I never enter such places; my mamma does not like me to."

"Or ever to tell Madam O'Connoll."

"Mayn't Betty know?"

"Certainly not. It's bad enough my having to be as rude as I am in flying off like this, without my adding insult to injury by telling some stupid story about the house."

"So be it; I won't tell Betty then."

"I went up to bed, you know; you gave me my candlestick—by the way, I believe you made my fingers black and blue." She examined critically her plump little digits. Miss "Dimples" runs to entrancing hollows even in her hands. "No, stay where you are—you need not look at it, thank you. Only be more careful next time you hand a person a candlestick. Well, we talked a little and brushed our hair, and drank some tea——"

"Do you women drink tea at that hour? What horrible depravity!"

"You men drink whiskey, which is worse. Now if you interrupt me *once* again, I shall stop altogether, so there! Well, I went to bed, as I said before; my room is called the Clock Room, and it is in the Priest's House. I locked my door quite securely, but I could not sleep for ages, not a wink, though I was dreadfully tired from that awful tramp and my poor feet—" here the "number two" shooting boots peeped out pathetically, to emphasise her remarks—"simply *ached*. I heard all you men go to bed, a nice noise you made; then I heard the servants go past, making those elaborate efforts to walk softly, that result in twice the noise of ordinary footsteps. Then I tried counting, but that woke me up all the more. At last I composed two new frocks, and the mental effort *did* make me drowsy, so that when I tried to recollect Dr. Monaghan's last Sunday's sermon, I was off in a few seconds."

"But Miss 'Dimples,' with your religious convictions, *do* you go to church?"

"Of course I do. One must give what Protestant tenants one has, a good example! Besides, I play the organ, and it's such fun composing the Voluntaries. You can't think what a beauty 'Something to play with' makes!" She laughed, merrily. "Now don't interrupt any more or I truly will stop. Just as I was dosing off great heavy footsteps coming up the stairs woke me up again, heavy steps like a big labourer with clod-hopping boots would make. I listened, thinking I was safe as my door was locked, wondering who it could be. The footsteps came along the corridor and stopped at my door for a second, and then came on right into my room, as if no door was there at all! I can swear the door never opened, but the footsteps came right on through—it sounds very mad I know, but it's truly true, Captain Gordon. The footsteps went about the room for several minutes, and I nearly *died* of fright. I kept my eyes tight closed, afraid I might see something and expire, or worse still, my hair turn white in a single night! However, at last I could not bear the horrible idea of this thing walking about unhindered, and I got strength to

open first one eye a teeny, weeny bit, and then both. It was quite light in the room, as the turf of my fire had fallen in and was burning brightly. Well, I looked about, but could *see* nothing, yet all the time the heavy footstep went on, across the room to the wardrobe and back to the fireplace—the very boards creaking under the weight of—nothing that I could see! At last to my horror the footsteps came over to the foot of my bed, and the ghost—Yes, it must have been a ghost, I am positively certain—sat down plump on the edge of the bed, almost on to my toes. It is a great big heavy ghost, too, for it made all the springs rattle. Fortunately, the bed in that room is very broad—one of those great spreading hospitable beds, you know, and I was lying away from the ghost, with only my feet over to its side; so gradually drawing my toes up—Heaven knows how I had courage to!—I crept softly out on the other side, and along the floor on my hands and knees into the corner behind my bath. The big felt mat the maid spreads for me to stand on, was folded up there, and I wrapped myself up in it. There I sat all night shivering with cold and fright, whilst that horrible great big pig of a ghost lay on *my* bed and snored and snorted most comfortably. You may laugh, Captain Gordon—I only hope it will go to you to-night—I did not feel in the least like laughing, I can assure you. When the morning came and it grew light enough to see, I looked over to the bed, fully expecting to see some hideous monster lying there; yet there wasn't a thing. My door was locked just as I had locked it; but on the second pillow—the one I had not used at all—was the impression of a heavy head, and all along the eider down quilt there was the mark where the huge long ghost had lain. I would not sleep another hour in this house—no, not for a million pounds. It's not at all kind of you to laugh at me, Captain Gordon, for I am quite in earnest, and really and truly I was utterly unnerved and never so frightened before in all my life."

I did my best to comfort the poor little girl, who evidently enough had really imagined an exceedingly



alarming experience, which, whether bred in her own nerves, or caused by some spiteful sprite, had succeeded in making her pass a very miserable night.

She was quite shaken, and had only just escaped a bad cold, as the result of her night out of bed, and was not at all fit for the fourteen Irish miles she must drive before she got to her own home; but in vain did I urge her to delay her going until the next day. She was stubbornness itself, and as the very suggestion of spending another night in Killman seemed to give her pain, I refrained from further pressing, and led our conversation into lighter, less nightmarish channels.

O'Connell and Adair joined us after a bit, and then Betty, with a cloth cap over her eyes, and a light 28-bore in her hands.

"I'm one of the guns to-day," she announced airily.

"No, you don't, Betty," replied her husband. "I'm not going to have murder committed on my land, if I can help it. Put that popgun away, if you are coming with us. If you *must* shoot to-day, you may go by yourself; not with the rest of us, if I know it."

"Oh! Maurice——"

"It's no good, my dear. Didn't you take the toe off my boots a few weeks ago, shooting rabbits out of the oats?"

"The shot did not go within a yard of your boots, you old story-teller."

"Quite near enough to ruin my nerve for the rest of the day, anyhow. Here, put up that gun, like a good girl, and help beat to-day. Betty always thinks if she taps an occasional tree, she is doing wonders. You'd shoot a beater for a moral certainty, and times are too bad now for me to be able to afford you 'big game.'"

"I've been out dozens of times," said Betty, with an injured air, "and wiped your eye before now."

"I daresay," said her husband, drily. "I've had many marvellous escapes, I will own. But since the corn-cutting—no, thank you. Once bitten, twice shy."

"Very well," said Betty, resigning her gun. "I will



beat to-day ; but to-morrow, Kenneth, you and I will go out together alone, and you'll see what sport we will have."

"If women *must* shoot," remarked O'Connell, dictatorially, "and now-a-days they are not happy unless they do everything we do—and lots of things we'd be ashamed to do—then let them make up their own parties, and shoot each other. There are plenty of superfluous women about."

Miss "Dimples" rose immediately to his insulting bait.

"You men are just jealous," she declared. "You know, O'Connell, your wife is a capital shot ! Of course, we women do everything better than you men ; and in shooting we score, because *we* haven't sat up half the night making *our* hands shaky with whiskey !"

"What about tea——" I began, but a fiery glance quelled me,

"I've known some pretty shots amongst ladies," said the diplomatic Captain Adair.

"My sister is a first-class shot," Betty remarked, "much better than I am. How we laughed at her this summer, though. We used to go out with a little repeating rifle, stalking rabbits, and at first she would start out with a silk-lined skirt and frou-frouey petticoats, that the rabbits could hear rustling a mile off. But plenty of women shoot now—and well, too. There's Lady Garry Owen, who is a champion at woodcock, and Lady East Riding knocks down all before her. And do you remember the American widow at the Chenistown shoot last year, Maurice ? She showed you men the way."

"With a huge cigar for ever in her mouth, and the tightest of tight rationals on. I can just picture you doing it, Betty." O'Connell laughed at the recollection of the Transatlantic dame. "Well, come along, here are the others—we must hurry up."

The morning's sport was as varied and excellent as the shooting of the day before. The pheasants were all wild birds—we only shot the cocks—and were mighty strong on the wing, as different from the turned-out

barn-door fowl as possible. We walked over the most different land—bog, covert, marsh, and heather succeeding each other in pleasant variety.

Besides long-tails, we massacred a few partridge, plenty of snipe, a mallard, a brace or two of grouse, golden plover, and many woodcock; also the usual plethora of bunnies. Hares we saw, but O'Connell preserves them strictly for a sporting pack of harriers, who hunt in the neighbourhood. Betty promised me a day with them, and also with the nearest foxhounds—two of the quarry of the latter pack breaking out of one covert, and stealing, grinning, away, not much discomposed by the wild view hallo that followed them,

After lunch, came a tender parting with Miss "Dimples." She was kind enough to express a hope we might meet again, and murmured comforting assurances that she would keep me some dances at a ball, coming off within the next ten days.

I never knew if Miss "Dimples" did keep those dances for me! Anyhow, I fear that lucky beggar, Adair, got the benefit of them; for events crowded, and sent me back across the silver streak, long before the ball came off.

Adair left Killman after dinner that night.

He came into my room, when I was changing my shooting things, and began to chat.

"What a rummy old place this is," he volunteered. "You never were here before, were you? There are no end of stories going round about ghosts, you know. Not that I believe in such yarns, do you?"

"You never found a moderately old place people did not say was haunted; and as Killman is immoderately old, of course they are bound to call it so," I answered, sententiously.

"Yes; but sometimes you do hear most unexplainable rows here. Why, only last night, I'd have sworn some one was singing in a big cupboard there is in the room I was given."

"Tricks, I should say."

"I don't know how it was done, all the same, as I

searched the beastly place out several times ; but no sooner did I get to bed again, than the infernal music began again."

"It's to be hoped your visitor had a pleasing voice," I laughed, at his injured tone.

"The song, if I could call it a song, was wordless—all a jumble of vowels, sung on a succession of minor notes, always ending in a particularly piercing tone that gave me a pain behind my eyes, and made me want to sit up and howl like a dog. I feel sure those poor brutes last night heard the same thing when they yelped. Oh ! of course it's all rot. I daresay I dreamt it ; but I thought I'd ask you if you had dreamt it, too. One doesn't like to ask O'Connell about the matter, for, though he is the best of good chaps, yet he's a bit touchy on that point. I remember once he was very near knocking my head off, because I hinted at something being wrong in another room I was then in."

I assured Adair I had not had "the mysterious minstrels" in my room, and asked for particulars of his other experiences.

"Mind you," he began, "I don't believe in ghosts, not for a second ; yet it is funny, I must own. What happened before ? Oh ! nothing much ; only every time I got into bed I was rolled out again. Mind you, I saw nothing, though I looked pretty smartly, I can tell you—with a candle in one hand and a revolver in the other—only, as I told you, no sooner did I lie down again than the mattress humped itself up and threw me."

"A bucking mattress is a new and added terror to the history of ghostology."

"I pulled the bally old bed to bits, and at last yanked it all out on to the floor, where I slept in a heap. The man who called me thought me quite mad, or very drunk. However, I told him I could not sleep any other way, and cleared that day. O'Connell would not believe a word of the matter—of course, he did not tell me so in so many words—but he laughed, and patted me on the back, and advised me to have four, instead of three, fingers of whiskey next time, and then I would sleep

better. Madam O'Connell laughed, too ; but promised she would never put me in that room again, and never has. Of course, all the talk of spirits is folly ; but this is a very rummy place, there's no doubt about that ! ”

With this he left me, and when he had gone I regretted that I had not asked him if, by any chance, it was in the room I was now in he had been so rudely disturbed ; but my mattress, as I punched it, seemed incapable of any such Buffalo Bill tricks.

When Adair had departed, after dinner, we talked shooting. I told shikari tales, and romanced over the tigers I had nobbled, giving the full account, from start to finish, of the exciting sport I had had with the late owners of two fine pelts I was giving to Betty.

Half-past eleven came and went, heralded as before by the dogs ; but in going over the stories of past hunts and big shoots, we took no heed of time. It was past twelve when Betty left us, and nearly one o'clock before we thought of turning in.

O'Connell rang up a servant, and asked him if the house was shut up, and the household gone to bed.

“ They have, O'Connell,” said the man.

“ Then you can go, too—I will put out the hall lamps,” answered his master. “ Now, Gordon, we'll have one more drink, and then go to bed.”

We walked into the hall, and O'Connell showed me the old-fashioned locks and heavy chains that barred the doors ; I mentally wondering how these chains *could* be taken from their staples, and dragged and rattled upstairs in the way Betty had described. Then he put out the lamps, and with “ Nell,” the fox-terrier, at my heels, and a favourite cat of his following him, we walked upstairs.

He saw me into my room, gave my fire a poke and made it up, then wishing me good-night, walked across the gallery to his dressing-room, and I heard him open and shut the door.

Left for the night, my first action, as it always is, was to lock my door. Then I put a candle and matches near my bed, and prepared to make my little friend “ Nell ” a comfortable corner.

The dog and I had grown allies. Betty said she was quite jealous, for Nell was a faithful old lady, who did not generally admit new loves into her doggie heart.

"It's one of Betty's tests with new people," O'Connell told me. "If Nell does not growl at them, they are all right; if she does, nothing will persuade Betty that they are not burglars in disguise, and she will have nothing to say to them."

I threw my rug down again to-night for Nell, who sat in front of the genial blaze, and turned her damp nose up to me in the trustful way that dogs have.

Wheeling a low roomy armchair into a good position for the light of the lamp to fall on my paper, I got my writing book, and, with my legs each side of the fireplace, began to write some letters, which it was absolutely necessary should leave by the next day's mail. Up to the present I had really had no time for writing, but now it was business and had to be done.

My first letter was to a firm of naturalists, who were setting up some Markhor heads and Big Horns for me, telling them to send two good specimens, and a couple of tiger skins on to Killman; next I wrote to my gun-makers about an express rifle I was in treaty for.

Pausing only to light my pipe—I can never get my ideas to run straight without the aid of my old briar—I began a long and rather intricate letter to my lawyer, about a monetary matter that had been giving me a great deal of bother lately.

Stooping to replenish the fire—the one drawback to these delightful turf fires is the constant need there is of putting on fresh sods—I looked down to see where the dog was, for I missed her from my feet.

Nell had disappeared.

I whistled softly and snapped my fingers. A faint tip, tip, tip, tip of a wagging tail told me her whereabouts. The fox-terrier had hidden under an old secretaire in the corner, and had no intention of coming out though I called her repeatedly.

"Don't be such a little fool," I said crossly, kneeling



down and pulling her out by the scruff of her neck. "You are not going to begin fresh pranks, I trust."

Nell's big brown humid eyes looked wistfully into mine, but the moment I relaxed my hold, she attempted to creep back under the secretaire again. However, I prevented her and carried her to the bed I had made for her by the fire.

Then I was just settling down to my writing again, when a scratching at the door caught my attention.

I looked up to listen—my eyes falling on the terrier.

She was sitting bolt upright on the rug, every hair of her coat bristling roughly, her lips drawn up, showing her old brown teeth, her ears laid back flat to her skull, her eyes fixed on the door, trembling with the same painful rigors of the night she had first been my companion.

The noise at the door continued—at first I fancied some cat or dog was trying to get in, but then I noticed that the scratches kept up a kind of time—one, two ; one, two, three ; one, two ; one, two, three.

I set my teeth. The unknown exponent of the art of practical joking at Killman had chosen the wrong time for a display of his pranks.

He was safer when he kept to the darkness of midnight, for when suddenly awakened out of sound sleep in a black Egyptian gloom, one is not so formidable a foe as when with a lamp lighted, candles burning, and fire blazing, one catches up a revolver that has often proved its accuracy and goes forth to inflict condign punishment on the villain or fool attempting to frighten one. Besides, I was really enraged at the dastardly way poor Betty had been tricked, and resolved that if "He," "She," or "It," who were guilty of these disturbances should show, they would regret the hour that they tempted their fate.

My revolver was soon taken from the holster case, in which I carry it about. I assured myself that it was loaded, then walking across the room and unlocking the door, I flung it wide open.

There was no one outside.

The landing and corridor were empty, and beyond, through the half-open door that divided the wing from

the tower, I could only see the blackness of the unlit gallery. As I listened, my straining ears seemed to catch the sound of a soft thud, then a rustle, then another soft thud going along the gallery ; but as I could not see, I turned quickly into my room, and catching up the candle from the table at the side of the bed, walked out on to the landing, and through the door into the gallery, holding the candle overhead, and striving to pierce the dark depths below and around me.

All was still now ; only my own breathing broke the silence. I sniffed the air—faugh ! a subtle, unknown, and horribly vile smell, filled my nostrils, and sent me back quite sickened to my room. There was no more to be done, so I shut and locked my door, and turned with a sigh to my bothering letters.

Nell welcomed my reappearance with rapture and every demonstration of delight. She jumped on to my knees, and tried to cover my face with her frenzied kisses. I felt that she was still trembling violently, so I soothed and petted her for a few minutes, before putting her back into her bed.

I had scarcely taken up my pen again, when a noise came from the far end of the gallery—thuds and brushings. It advanced right up to my door, and whatever caused the noise fell or threw itself one or twice heavily against my door, making the whole framework shake ; then the scraping began again—one, two ; slow and long scratches right down the panel. One, two, three ; shortly and quickly succeeding each other ; then a rustling or brushing noise against the door, followed by another thud and more scratching.

I sprang up, sending my papers flying in all directions, rushing to the door, unlocking it and tearing it open. The same sickening smell struck my nostrils ; the mat that lay across the threshold was half turned back ; but beyond this there was no more to be seen this time than before.

But most unmistakably I heard the rustling, brushing, soft dumping noise at the end of the gallery !

Should I walk across and rouse O'Connoll ?



That entailed waking Betty, and her being left alone whilst I carried off her husband to help in the hunt for this mysterious night bird, who was disturbing me. I was the only occupant I knew of the red wing, the O'Connell's alone in the blue wing, and in the Priests' House were the babies and servants.

Should I cross the gallery, I debated, go through the blue corridor, down the stairs and into the Priests' House, in search of the butler?

I had no kind of idea which was his room, and my endeavours to discover him might land me in nurseries with terrified shrieking babies and irate nurses, or in the women servants' quarters, where indignant and hysterical maids would call down vengeance on my devoted head.

Even should I succeed in finding the man's room, what should I ask his aid for—a burglar hunt?

But burglars do not scratch with their finger nails on people's doors.

A ghost hunt?

Then I should probably frighten all Betty's domestics into departing next day, besides laying up endless ridicule for myself when nothing came of it. How did I know that Oscar, the deer-hound, had not been taught the clever trick of scratching and bumping in correct time?

There was nothing for it but to go back and await further developments.

I shut the door, but did not lock it, put my papers away, all idea of further writing being out of the question, placed the lamp on a chest of drawers exactly opposite the door, lighted every candle in the room, and revolver in hand, stood by the door ready to wrench it wide open before the practical joker could have time to depart.

The first intimation of the return of my visitant, was, as usual from "Nell," the fox-terrier. Again, her coat bristled and her limbs stiffened, the same visible tremor shook her whole body, and her eyes once more fixed themselves agonised on the door.

In a little, I too heard the bump, bump, bump, along the gallery, the rustling and brushing, the thump against

the door, a sniff under it, and a long scratch, as if with a sharp finger-nail, down the paint.

Breathless with excitement, I flung back the door.

In a moment I knew what Betty had meant when she said her hair "moved." For my flesh all over my body and scalp crept, and every hair on my head stood straight on end.

People will scoff at the idea of a grown man, in full possession of his physical and mental faculties, admitting without reserve that he was utterly, undeniably terror-stricken, as I was, and absolutely paralysed with fright; my hand holding the revolver dropped limply to my side as in the full glare of the lamp I saw the Creature that squatted in the doorway.

No one who has not experienced the sensation can in the smallest measure understand the absolute weakness that came over me, the seeming cessation of the pulses of life, the grip in heart and brain, the deadly numbness that rendered me incapable of thought, word or action, when I first saw that awful beast.

I heard a sharp yelp from the terrier just after the door swung back, but after that there was no further sound or movement from the dog, and the Creature on the mat and I faced each other in absolute silence. The lamp burnt brightly, the fire fizzed and puffed, and my fascinated eyes took in every detail, every gruesome feature, of the indescribable Horror that squatted at my door.

The Thing was about the size of a sheep, thin, gaunt and shadowy in parts. Its face was human, or to be more accurate, inhuman, in its vileness, with large, projecting, opaque yellow eyes, loose slobbery lips, and a thick saliva dripping jaw, sloping back suddenly into its neck; nose it had none, only spreading, cancerous holes, the whole face being one uniform tint of grey, as was the dark coarse hair that covered its head, neck and body. Its fore arms were thickly coated with the same hair, so were its paws, large, loose, and hand-shaped; and as it sat on its hind legs, one hand or paw was raised, and a claw-like finger was extended ready to scratch the paint.

Its lustreless eyes, which seemed half-decomposed, and looked incredibly foul, stared into mine, and the horrible smell that had before offended my nostrils, only a hundred times intensified, came up into my face, filling me with a deadly nausea. I noticed the lower half of the creature was indefinite and seemed semi-transparent—at least, I could see the framework of the door that led into the gallery *through* its body.

I cannot tell you exactly how long we thus stood, gazing at each other—time seemed to cease and eternity begin—but at last the creature gave a species of hop and landed well inside the room.

Then my hitherto nerveless fingers closed round my revolver—oh! the comfort its cold stock gave me—and covering the creature carefully between its prominent eyes—I fired.

A crash of lead striking the wood of the large hanging cupboard behind the object I aimed at, told me I had either missed, or my bullet had gone clean through the Thing's head. *It* did not seem one bit inconvenienced, merely turning its vile countenance at the sound of the splintering wood.

I took aim once more, desperately determining that if lead could solve the mystery, my bullet should this time.

I *could* not have missed, but another ping of the bullet into the wardrobe was the only result of the second shot.

My flesh crept again, and a stifling tightness clutched my throat. Either my eyesight was failing, or the Creature was gradually becoming less distinct. Just as I was preparing for a third shot, it reared itself upright, and holding its arms rather bent, it took one step forward, as if about to spring upon me.

Was it the trick of my hot aching eyes or not? I cannot say, but the horrible bestial lines of the Creature gradually merged into the grey, featureless shape Betty had described.

Overcoming the strongest physical repugnance at the thought of the Creature touching me I pressed my revolver right up to or *into* its breast—and fired! Spring-

ing back to avoid its hands clutching me, my ankle twisted, and I fell, something striking me a sharp stinging blow on the temple.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next thing I heard was Betty's voice saying joyfully, "He is coming to, now doctor, I am sure."

My eyelids seemed weighted as with lead, but with an effort I opened them, to see a man I could not recollect having ever seen before, standing over me with a pair of scissors in one hand and a roll of sticking plaster in the other.

Beside him stood Betty, and Maurice was supporting my head. I was lying on a bed in a small room I had not been in before, but which, from the whips and boots about, I guessed rightly to be O'Connell's dressing-room.

"You fell and split your skull open against an iron bed-post, old man," said Maurice. "We got Dr. Charterly out to mend you up."

"Not quite as bad as that, O'Connell," the doctor corrected, smiling. "I expect Captain Gordon has had many a worse head than this. There, that's as neat a job as I can make of it; you'll have to wear your hat well over your eyes to hide the 'plashter,' or your friends will say you've been prize-fighting. Want to get up, do you? I would not if I were you, it's not much more than seven yet, so lie where you are until breakfast time, and try and get a sleep. Here, drink this up."

"Betty," I called rather weakly, feeling an insane desire to cry, "Betty, are you all safe?"

"Of course Madam O'Connell is. Why wouldn't she be?" interrupted the doctor. "It's ruining her complexion, she is, stopping out of bed like this. Now O'Connell, please, I'll be much obliged if you and your good lady will leave me alone with my patient. With your permission I will take a couple of hours' rest in this fine chair, and then invite myself to breakfast with you, for I'm due at your dispensary at ten, so it's not worth while going home."

Betty pressed my hand, and they left me alone with the doctor.

I was beginning to speak when he stopped me. "Look here, Captain Gordon," he said, "I presume you want to get well fast; well then, don't be bothering your poor battered brain with thinking. You've had a fall and a fright—well, no one else at all was frightened or hurt, and you yourself are not at all bad; if you sleep now, you'll be all well again when you wake up."

"Doctor," I cried, earnestly, "I must be well enough to get to Dublin to-night; and Madam O'Connell——"

"And Madam O'Connell and Himself are to go with you—by medical orders!" the doctor said, with a comical twist of his face. "I'm hunting the lot of ye away for a change, babies and all. So unless you want to be left here all alone with the alternative of Ballykinkope Union Infirmary, get to sleep and be fit for the journey."

He sat in an armchair, wrapped a rug round his feet, and vouchsafed me no more words. My thoughts were confused and chaotic; but before I could arrange them the medicine he had given me did its work, and I went to sleep.

O'Connell was sitting in the room when I awoke, and a tray with breakfast things was on a table beside my bed.

My head was quite clear now, I was free from aches and pains and very hungry.

"The doctor said you could get up when you'd eaten something. But there is no hurry, Gordon, as our train does not go until three o'clock. Feeling pretty fit again?"

"I'm so awfully sorry, O'Connell," I began, but he stopped me.

"I know what you mean old man—it's no fault of yours, I suppose. Look here though about last night. It's Betty I don't want to have frightened."

"What happened when I fell? I suppose you heard my shots and came in?"

"You let fly three times, didn't you? I didn't hear

the first shot. Betty did, and awoke me just at the second. I was half across the gallery when you fired last."

"Then you saw——"

He cut me short.

"My dear fellow, I saw nothing: I make a point of *never* seeing anything in this house. I simply cannot afford to! It's like this. I *must* live here and see to things myself. I have nearly a thousand acres in my own hands, and to farm to a profit needs the Master's eye, let me tell you! Then you know—or probably you don't know—that the rents are all cut down thirty per cent. by the Land Courts, and even *with* that, one has to *give* reductions to get them paid. Why, if a fellow does not keep his wits about him, the reduced rentals would hardly cover the family charges, to say nothing of the Government extortions, tithe rent, quit rent, and all the rest that must be paid in full—they don't reduce them, mind you, *pro rata* to the falling rentals they are paid out of! Dozens of poor devils all over Ireland—smaller landlords—have no living margin at all. One lad near here, with an estate that used to be worth £14,000 a year has to make up his mother's jointure of £2000 a year very considerably from money left him in England—the whole estate not paying its way. The largest landlords are more or less rent collectors for the chargeants and the Government! So here I must live—if we are to live at all and provide for our children. Then to look at the matter in another light. My father, grandfather, and their fathers before them, spent their lives here—deuced long ones, too, judging by my grandfather's. The ghosts were talked of then just the same, and no one was one bit the worse for them that I ever heard of. My idea is, if you leave them alone, they will leave you; so I have not seen, and do not see, and never *will* see one of them. But with Betty it is different! So Gordon, I want you to help me—do tell her a good thumping likely lie, and make her think you were dre——"

"Kenneth can economise that lie," Betty's voice said



gently. She had heard her husband's last words as she came into the room. "I know what you are talking about, and I know Kenneth was not dreaming, but I don't want to know or hear another word on the subject. We'll stop in Dublin until November is over and then—then we'll come home. I am so sorry, Kenneth, that you have proved to be one of the small percentage who 'see.' Many, many people come here, see nothing, and scoff at the idea of there being anything to see. Now I'm going to pack up. Don't you go into the other wing again; the clothes you want will be brought you here, and the rest packed up. Now be a sensible man and don't go trying to remember all last night" (as if there was the smallest danger of my forgetting it) "but eat up your breakfast before you move."

"Betty's right," said O'Connell. "We won't talk of ghosts again. After all, what is the good? It all leads to nothing."

"Where is Nell?" I asked, suddenly thinking of my little terrier friend.

"She's dead," O'Connell answered shortly, and I needed no more particulars.

\* \* \* \*

"If ever you tell the story of your experience in Killman," said Betty, when the train was bearing us all to Dublin, "you'll be accused of inventing every word, and people will say that you might have thought of something more provable."

"I sincerely trust that if you *are* tempted to pass on Betty's gossip and stories, you won't bring my name into it! It's bad enough to be a distressed Irish landlord, with a wife who makes ghosts an excuse for trips to town and to Dublin at the most inconvenient seasons. It's bad enough to have daughters to provide for, and a Conservative Government doing its level best to ruin you—without having the only roof you can hide your miserable head under dubbed 'haunted,' and, in consequence, your friends refusing to come near you, or if you do get them into the house, making holes in your

poor sticks of furniture with a revolver, and then refusing to stay more than two days, when they promised you a month!"

\* \* \* \*

I saw Betty in town the other day and asked her what of the apparitions at Killman.

"Just the same," she answered briefly.

"What will you do about next November?" I asked.

"Sufficient unto the day," was her reply.

As I said when I began, I expect nobody to believe this record of facts. That the apparitions are purposeless, and not in the least provable, I admit. Yet that they appear in this year of grace 1897 I most firmly aver, for "seeing is believing!"

## The Midnight Express.

IT was the day before Christmas, and I had been more than busy, shopping in town, not only the many gifts for the family party at Denhams which I was taking down with me, but my sister had also sent me a long list of things to buy for the villagers and the school children, as she is quite the Lady Bountiful of that part of the world, and delights in keeping up the old time ways of making the whole neighbourhood share in the Christmas festivities at Denham Court.

The shops were crowded with people on the same errand as myself, and it was no easy matter to get served, though the overworked shopmen were doing their best, so by the time I had completed my purchases and got to the station with my many and various packages, the eight o'clock train that I had hoped to catch was gone, and there was nothing for it but to exercise what patience I could and wait for the next train which left at ten o'clock. So telegraphing to Denham to let him know I should not be home until after one o'clock in the morning, I sat down to amuse myself as I best could with the hurrying, pushing throng, that passed me constantly on the platform of the station.

Men with their coat collars turned up—for it was a cold night—running to catch their trains, their arms laden with bundles, out of the wrapping papers of which stuck the shafts of small carts, horses' legs, the uncovered heads of drums, and now and again the flaxen hair and blue eyes of some doll that would give joy to some small mother on the morrow. Women with tiny babies in their arms, and dragging a dozen small children at their skirts would get hopelessly entangled in the hurrying mass, and one wondered how the much burdened officials

managed to separate them and get them into their proper trains.

Among those who attracted my notice most was a tall, foreign-looking young man, he was not hurrying as the others were, but came and took up his stand under the clock, near me, and it was this very quietude among the frantic rush that first drew my eyes to him ; that, and a sort of strange fascination I felt in looking at him.

He wore a circular Italian cloak made of a dark cloth which fell to his knees, the fur collar of which was turned up around his long thin neck, a soft black felt hat was pulled down somewhat, over the sombre eyes that looked out so darkly from under the brim. For half-an-hour he must have stood there without moving, except for a rapid stealthy look over his shoulders when any one approached closely to him ; and once or twice during the time he lifted his hat, and ran his fingers rapidly through his long black hair, which hung down in a heavy mass below his cloak collar.

At last my weary waiting was over, and the porter picking up my many packages, and piloting me along the platform saw me safely into a first class carriage at the front of the train, where, as I had the compartment to myself, I was able to make myself comfortable for the long journey. I unstrapped my rugs, made a pillow for my head out of my muff, and covering myself up well, lay gazing out of the window as we slowly steamed out of the station.

I was glad to be alone, and thankfully remembered that the ten o'clock train was an express, so I should be able to take an undisturbed nap when I felt sleepy.

It was a clear, cold night with a most brilliant moon, almost at its full, and the landscape when we finally got out into the country away from even the last straggling suburbs, stood out most clear and distinct in the white light ; a slight fall of snow had covered the ground to the depth of an inch or two, rounding and smoothing all its inequalities and causing the leafless trees that were silhouetted sharply against its whiteness, to look like fine etchings drawn on the pure background.

After a while I took out one of my books and tried to read, but the lamp gave a very uncertain light, indeed I began to suspect that on this high pressure day it had been overlooked by the man who should have trimmed it, and as it grew dimmer and dimmer I shut my book and settled myself down more comfortably in my corner and in a few minutes I fell fast asleep.

How long I slept I do not know, but I suddenly awakened to a feeling of not being alone in the compartment, and opening my eyes I saw that two other passengers must have got into the carriage while I slept. Being Christmas eve no doubt the arrangements of the line were altered, and the ten o'clock train was not an express as I had fancied.

The lamp had quite gone out, but the moonlight was, if anything, brighter than before, and as it shone directly into the windows of our compartment, everything was to be seen almost as plainly as by day, and by its light I looked lazily at my companions. On the opposite side, in the corner furthest from me, close to the window, sat a young girl, with fair golden hair and blue eyes, that looked frankly at me across the carriage; she was well dressed, and her bag and rugs, and various travelling necessities had that nameless air of wealth that is so hard to describe but so readily seen; a book, which she had evidently been trying to read by the moonlight, lay on the seat beside her, and one ungloved hand supported her head.

The other passenger sat directly opposite to me in the other corner; he was somewhat in shadow, as the moonlight did not reach up to his face as he leant back against the cushions, but I could see enough to make out a tall man wrapped up in a coat or cloak, and a hat drawn somewhat down over his brows; he was evidently asleep, at least he sat so still I imagined so. And lying there I began to idly speculate on the two passengers, and if they had any connection with each other; they must at least have entered the train together, as it was hardly possible we could have stopped at more than one station during my sleep, and, yes—she was a married woman, for on

her hand held up to her face I could see the plain gold ring that showed it ; most probably the man in the corner was her husband, not newly married, or they would not have put the distance of the carriage between them. Yes—certainly he must be her husband, for at this moment he leant a little forward, though still in shadow, and with a long slim hand lifted one of the rugs on the seat close beside her and threw it over his own knees. At the same moment she turned her head a little more towards him, and gave him a cold look of disapproval.

Poor little wife, looking more closely at her, she did not look happy, a little frown drew the pretty eyes together, and the corners of the small mouth had a discontented droop. She looked very young, too, and so pretty, with a little sort of foreign air, in spite of her fair hair and quite English-looking face.

Presently I saw her settle herself more comfortably back in her corner, and her heavy eyelids gradually closing, she seemed to fall asleep. I was about doing the same, when I was attracted by the man opposite, moving restlessly and yet stealthily ; once or twice he leant forward towards the girl as though to make sure she was really asleep, and as he did so he left the shadow of the corner and the full moonlight fell upon his upturned face, so I was able to see him most distinctly, and to my surprise I recognised the same man who had attracted my attention in the station during my long wait ; but now the face I had thought so calm and statuesque seemed to work with a strange passion, and the sombre eyes were flashing like a tiger's when ready to spring.

He did not seem to notice me, but his movements had thoroughly awakened me, and I lay watching him closely, while at the same time a strange feeling of evil seemed to weigh upon me, and I felt as if a heavy hand of ice was laid upon my heart. Sinking back in his corner again, he unfastened with long white fingers the clasp of his cloak, which, released from its fastening, fell in heavy folds around him.

It was the same cloak I had noticed him wearing in the station—a long Italian circular, of heavy cloth and



handsome fur collar; then sliding his hand into the pocket of the cloak, he drew something out, and bending over it, seemed occupied with it for some time; then suddenly rising, with the step of a panther, stepped out into the moonlight, and I saw the naked blade of a short dagger gleam as he raised it in his hand.

Merciful heavens! we were shut in with a madman; and hurriedly disentangling myself from my wraps, I tried to rise to my feet. At the same moment, I saw him throw himself on the poor girl in the corner, and clutching her throat, bury the dagger into her side.

With a loud shriek, and without thought of the consequences, I sprang to the floor to rush forward to try and save the unfortunate creature, but at the same moment, with a shrill whistle, the train dashed into a tunnel, which after the moonlight, seemed doubly dark in our unlighted carriage.

I felt how powerless I was to cope with this madman, and when the dark fell so suddenly on us I was quite overcome by a frantic feeling of fear, and crouched back in my corner, trying to cower under the rugs to protect myself at least from his violence.

Can you imagine the horror of it?—the intense darkness and this awful deed taking place so close to me? The terror of it will remain with me always, and seemed at that moment to turn me into stone.

Every minute was an age. I could fancy the man creeping softly along the carriage to clutch my throat too in his deadly grasp, when with another whistle the train dashed out of the tunnel into the broad moonlight again, and I was alone!—alone! Think of it!

He must have, in the short time, thrown her poor body out on to the track; but where was he? and, quite dazed, I flew to the side of the carriage to thrust my arm out and pull the alarm. Heavens! what was this? Both windows were closed and the door, on that side, at least, locked, for I tried it in my horror, and, looking wildly about the carriage, no marks of violence, no rugs, no cloak—nothing to show that any other being had been in the compartment but myself; only the calm moonlight

lay over all. Weak and dazed, I sank back on the seat. Was it *I* that was mad? Could I disbelieve the sight of my own eyes? Ah! it was terrible! and I was still sitting, almost incapable of thought and with heart beating violently, when the train ran into the little station of Denham. I gathered my rugs up mechanically as the guard opened the door. I must have shown in my face what I had gone through, for the man said in an alarmed tone as he helped me out—

“Would you like anything, ma’am? You look faint. Or shall I help you to the carriage? it is just outside.”

I refused his kind offer, but stopped him to ask what stations we had stopped at since leaving London. He shook his head and said—

“None. It is the ten o’clock express; though, to be sure, it is main late.”

On reaching home I told my sister and brother-in-law, but I could see they thought that, tired out with my long day in town, that I had slept the whole journey, and had had a troubled dream.

However, the horror of the night had made me thoroughly ill, and for many days I kept my room, with nerves quite shattered and suffering from a sort of low fever, to which I was predisposed from my many years spent abroad.

Our own doctor was away from home on a holiday, but his clever young partner visited me, and took much interest in my account of all that had occurred, and his belief in my sanity, and the realising of what I had seen, comforted me, though after the first confidence he forbade me talking of it, and advised me to put it from my thoughts as far as I could.

So gradually I got back my peace of mind, and ceased to constantly dwell upon the mystery.

I was helped in this by the bright young party that was about me. All the nephews and nieces were home from school, and the nursery children were full of fun and frolic.

About the middle of January, when I was in the sunny

morning room, helping arrange the lovely flowers that the gardener had just brought in from the hothouse, the butler came to know if I would see Dr. Sands and a person he had brought with him, and directly afterwards the young doctor made his appearance, accompanied by a quiet-looking, gentlemanly man of somewhat solemn demeanour. As soon as we were alone he was presented to me as a well-known detective from Scotland Yard, who wished to ask me a few questions about my Christmas Eve experience, and I was surprised to have him beg I would minutely describe the appearance and dress of the man who had taken the leading part in my night of terror; and, taking out his note-book, he jotted down every item, and then, begging me not to be shocked, told me that he had every reason to believe that the strange occurrence I had witnessed had actually taken place—not on the night I saw it, but twelve months before.

A murder had been committed in the ten o'clock express from London on that same line, and, strangely enough, in the same carriage in which I had journeyed down from town. Since the occurrence it had not been used, having been placed on a siding, but the pressure on Christmas Eve was so great that every carriage available had been pressed into service.

That night, twelve months ago, when the train reached its destination, the carriage was empty, though the porter in the London station swore to putting two people into it before starting, a lady and gentleman; though in the hurry of departure and the crowded state of the platform, he had hardly time to observe him. The compartment, however, showed signs of a terrible struggle—rugs, umbrellas, and various travelling necessities were strewn about, and the blood-marked cushions were pulled on to the floor; the carriage window was broken and the door unfastened.

Telegraphing down the line, the body of a young girl was found, lying on the rails, quite dead, stabbed to the heart.

“A beautiful young thing she must have been,” said the detective, “with fair golden hair; a broad gold wedding

ring was on her finger, but nothing on or about her that could lead to her identification."

The papers were full of the murder and inquest for some days; but being in India at the time, I had not heard anything of it.

Every means had been taken to discover the murderer, but all had failed, and at Scotland Yard they had begun to look upon it as one of those mysteries that would never be found out; but oddly enough their attention had again been attracted to the subject by a communication from the Italian police, who begged their help to discover the whereabouts of an Italian Count, who was supposed to be in hiding in London, and their description of the man tallied in every particular with mine, and they had no doubt he was the long-looked-for murderer of the poor young creature.

According to the account from Italy, he was a well-known man, belonging to an aristocratic family in one of the northern provinces. They owned a fine old castle and considerable lands in the Apennines, but were thought proud and poor; and the present Count was, on account of dissipated habits, more straightened than most of the family.

A little over a year ago he had married a young and beautiful German girl, the orphan daughter of a wealthy banker, who had a large fortune of her own.

After six months of married life, which seemed far from happy, owing to his violent temper, they had left the castle to travel; the Count telling everyone that he and his wife intended spending some little time in England. But they had been absent only a fortnight or so when the Count returned alone, telling the household that the Countess had been taken suddenly ill while in London, and died, and that he had only waited for the funeral to return.

By a will made at the time of the marriage, the whole of the Countess's money came to the Count, and on his return he threw himself once more into his wild and dissolute life, which much scandalized his household, who had grown very fond of the young Countess during

her short life at the castle, and who felt aggrieved that the Count had not let them know of her illness and death while he was away.

Some months after he had gone to Florence taking his valet with him, and the man, whose name was Santro, had made friends with an English valet whose master was staying at the same hotel, and who had brought down for the benefit of the other servants a pile of English papers that had accumulated in his master's rooms during some months. On looking them over Santro had been struck with the account of the murder in the train, an account of which was given fully in the paper, and became more and more convinced as he read that the poor young creature so minutely described was his poor mistress, particularly when he remembered that his master had stopped all enquiries they had made as to their mistress's illness and death, in a most violent manner, which had caused great suspicion in the servants' minds. Determined to satisfy himself Santro took the paper up to his master's room with his afternoon cup of coffee, and folding it so that he could not avoid seeing the account, laid it down in front of him.

The result was more than Santro anticipated. The Count rose to his feet as pale as death, then flying into a terrible passion and heaping upon Santro's head every possible malediction, he seized his hat and cloak and abruptly left the room.

Santro frightened at what had occurred, but more than ever convinced of the Count's guilt, waited in great alarm for his return; but as hour after hour passed he became anxious and went to consult with his brother who was in the police force, who insisted upon laying the whole story before the proper authorities, and they deeming it most suspicious sent at once to apprehend the Count at his castle, to which he was supposed to have gone.

However he had not been there, but had at once gone to his Florence bankers, and drawing out a very large sum of money had evidently left Italy, and after some weeks of search the police became convinced that he had

made his way to England and so communicated with Scotland Yard.

My description of the murderer—strangely enough as I had come by it—so tallied with that of the Italian police that there was no doubt but the Count must be the murderer of the poor young creature.

Also my having seen him on the platform on Christmas night eve showed that he was still in London, and once on his track the police followed him persistently, until they came up with him in one of the western cities of America whither he had fled to escape them. Brought to bay, however, he managed to escape justice by shooting himself while the police were endeavouring to secure him, perhaps better for himself and far better for his family, who were spared the disgrace of one of their members meeting with a felon's death.

L. McQUAID.



## The Soul of the Brahmin: A Psychological Problem.

### CHAPTER I.

“ So this is poor Archie’s legacy!—this is a handsome but rather queer one, Captain Lyall.”

“ Granted ; but it is very valuable—worth a couple of thousand, if not more.”

“ You don’t say so ? It’s the jewels, of course.”

“ Not altogether. It is of great antiquity. Magnificent work like that cannot be reproduced now ; the secret is lost. How old would you say that weapon was, Hillyard ? ”

David Hillyard shook his head ; like most men who have never been in the East, he had no knowledge of the native arts. Captain Lyall smiled.

“ Six centuries must have passed since that hilt was fashioned and that steel tempered,” he said quietly. “ Look at this.”

He lifted the small, glittering article as he spoke, and held it up. It was a tiny dagger—its blade only a few inches in length, its handle representing a lizard. Taking the point between his thumb and forefinger, he bent the blade backward till its tip touched the shaft, then let it go, when it sprang to its straight form again with a flash like living water and a queer singing sound, unlike anything Hillyard had ever heard. The blade seemed to quiver angrily for an instant, while red rays darted up and down its length with lightning-like rapidity. But it was only for a moment ; the clear steel resumed its cold, cruel glitter, and the Captain laid the weapon back on the table beside its sheath.

“ They cannot make steel so flexible as that now-a-

days, no more than they can imitate nature as has been done on that handle," he observed. "That lizard might be a living creature, the imitation is so perfect."

"It's rather a harmless little thing to choose for a handle to such a wicked-looking article," said Hillyard.

"It doesn't represent a harmless animal; that is a Darrah lizard, one of the most deadly little beasts ever discovered, but fortunately, very rare," was Lyall's reply.

"Have you ever come across one over there?" asked David curiously, Lyall's tone was so significant.

"Twice; though very few Europeans ever see one at all," said Lyall, "And 'pon my word but for knowing that it's only a handle, I should believe that was a third one I see before me," and he touched the lizard with a look of genuine admiration.

"My first sight of one was when we had camped on one of our marches," he resumed. "It was near a ruined temple, and I strolled out with Hamilton of ours to smoke a cigar in the coolness, after dinner. I had my terrier with me, and we were dawdling among the fallen pillars when the dog started one of these creatures from under a stone. The terrier was young and untrained; she made a great fuss, barking and pursuing the lizard. She got so near it I thought she would snap and kill it, so I called her off. But the vicious little beast turned on the dog, and whether it spat in her eyes or bit her nose I can't say, but with a yell of pain Jilt ran back to me, and the lizard disappeared. But in a quarter of an hour the poor doggie was dead—died in strong convulsions. My opinion is that the creature spat, but Hamilton says it bit the dog, so I don't really know; as Jilt's head was so enormously swelled we could not tell. My other sight of a Darrah was when I was being carried in my palkee after a sharp attack of fever. I saw it looking down at me from a branch above the path. My bearers saw it too, and ran from it, taking me, of course, with them. There are so few of these poisonous lizards now that they are not much spoken about, but I am told they were quite common when we first occupied India. They're long-lived, too, the natives say. Most lizards are, I think."

Hillyard took up the dagger, and examined it more closely. The handle was of a dark shining green—the lizard's forelegs extended forming the cross-handle, the blade being like a long silvery tongue, and the slender tail turned and twisted round the hind feet and body to form the handle proper. The reptile's eyes were two large diamonds, magnificent "cat's-eye" diamonds, whose yellow dazzling glow gave the head a curious, watchful look. Behind the eyes a patch of vivid crimson was simulated by a pair of great oval carbuncles of exactly the same size, the mottled pattern on head and body alike being carried out in countless sapphires, amethyst, topaz, and emerald stones, so beautifully set that their combined lustre shifted, gleamed, and scintillated as though the creature breathed. The long, pale lines that ran round the entire animal from corner to corner of its mouth, separating the back and upper part from the throat, abdomen, and tail, were composed of pearls, opals, moonstones, and other semi-opaque gems, and the whole, even to the minute diamond-tipped claws, represented such wonderful ingenuity, skill, and patience, that, even had the materials been less costly, would have won the admiration of more civilised workmen than those who had fashioned it.

David Hillyard laid the weapon down with a reluctant hand ; he had held it for a long time.

"I could look at it for hours," he said, smiling. "How came Archie to possess such a rare treasure? Who gave it him? He could not purchase an article so much beyond his means."

"It was bequeathed to him by a brother officer, if I remember, Major Owen, who met such a tragic fate. But Bannerman will be able to tell you. He knows," answered Lyall.

"And who is Bannerman?" inquired David, his gaze still fixed upon his new possession,

"Poor Archie's Irish soldier-servant," was the reply. "But that reminds me, Bannerman has some strange ideas about the dagger, though how he came to have them Heaven knows. Like all uneducated Irishmen, he is

fearfully superstitious, so I suppose that's why he believes the thing is uncanny."

"Bannerman wanted to enter my service after his master's death," resumed the Captain. "But as I was going home, and it wanted but a few months of the time when he could take his discharge and gain a good service pension, I persuaded him to wait for it. I expect he'll be over with the next batch of time-expired men. He is sure to look us both up. I think he has my address and knows yours. He always posted his master's letters, you know."

"If he's a decent fellow I'll keep an eye on him for Archie's sake," said Hillyard warmly.

"As worthy a fellow as ever wore the Queen's scarlet," said Lyall sententiously. "Now my trust is discharged I must be off, Davie. We'll meet to-night, of course, at the Granger's 'crush,' and you'll dine with me and a few old chums at the club on Friday."

Left alone, Hillyard examined his queer legacy again. How weirdly beautiful it was! What lovely lights flashed from the gems upon the lizard! He tried to count them, but never got further than the mouth of the reptile. The great cat's-eye diamonds with their yellow gleam had a strange, watchful expression, he fancied, as though the creature expected him to do something, and wished to see what. The tiny weapon fascinated him by its beauty. He laid it aside reluctantly at last, but the time was passing, his work could not wait (he was a journalist), he was tied to a certain hour, and could not spare a minute longer.

"I'll have a thorough inspection later on, and I really think I'll take it with me to-night; it will be a capital protector, and it's far too valuable to leave in a place like this," he said to himself, as he sat down to write after slipping the dagger into its sheath and covering it with some loose papers.

He was fully occupied till the dusk of the November afternoon had fallen. He laid down his pen as the clock struck four, and the lad sent for his "copy" knocked at the door of his chambers.

"I've saved myself by the skin of my teeth," he muttered, collecting his scattered sheets. "Hullo, Coles! Are you quite well, lad? You look precious seedy."

"I'm quite well, thank you, sir," answered the boy, a slender, nervous-looking fellow of fourteen. "There's a foreign gentleman outside; I think he's coming up here."

"All right, Coles, tell him as you go down that I am disengaged," said David. "There's your packet, so be off."

He went to the door to receive his visitor, certain that Coles would deliver his message. But he heard the lad run down without pausing, and after waiting a minute, as no one appeared, he shut the door rather crossly.

"Coles must be cracked, there's nobody there," he muttered. "I'll have no interruption now, as it is after hours, so I shall have another look at the dagger. Hullo! what's that?"

A soft drowsy hum, coming from nowhere in particular, filled the room. It was a musical, languorous sound, so sweet and faint, it seemed sometimes to die away entirely, but always became audible again. David decided that the man in the rooms beneath, a new-comer, must be of a musical turn and was playing some instrument, so once more resumed his examination of his new possession. But his neighbour's performance seemed to make him fanciful. As he listened to the rhythmic rise and fall of the music that was no tune or time, or anything but a mere sound, he seemed to dream dreams, to see visions—awful, maddening, horrible visions, but with no shape or coherence, nothing to recall or remember. One thing only he was conscious of, that someone had entered and was watching him from the shadow of the high mantel. How long the curious state of half-waking consciousness lasted he could not tell; a lethargy was upon his faculties; he could not break it, strive as he might against the terror of his dreams. But suddenly the music stopped, and with it the horror fled. He sprang to his feet.

"Confound the man, with his eerie strumming," he

cried angrily, "I've actually been sitting, compelled to listen, for two mortal hours. It's enough to make a lunatic of any sane creature to hear that sound. No wonder I had horrible dreams. I've been really asleep, I suppose, for I thought the man was actually here in the room beside me."

He got lights, and had his dinner, then dressed for the "At Home," slipping the Darrah dagger into a secret breast-pocket of his dress vest, a pocket he often used for notes connected with his work. Then bidding his man go to bed when he pleased, he bowled away in a hansom, for the hour was late.

"If I get a chance I'll show Derwent the little toy," he muttered. "I wonder what *she* will think of it. What a splendid ornament for her hair it may make if she fancies it," and he smiled in a happy, exultant way as his fingers closed on the jewel-crusted dagger-hilt.

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## CHAPTER II.

MRS. GRANGER was fond of lions—the two-legged species that roar in drawing-rooms—and David expected to see a few that evening. Nor was he disappointed. He was introduced to a short, fat German, who had made such a tremendous discovery that the Rontgen Rays would pale before it ere long; also to a long, lean, young Hungarian, whose special mission was to annihilate Paderewski. There were others apparently. He caught glimpses at odd times of a slight, tawny-complexioned man in the crowd—a man with a sinister face, whose peculiar dress belonged to no country he knew. This man's eyes always met his own when he looked towards him, but the other guests seemed not to care to address him.

"Who can he be?" wondered Hillyard. "If I could get near Louisa I would ask her, but she has never come in my way since she shook hands when I entered. How ill she looked; she was far from well."



Just then he saw Miss Derwent and her brother coming slowly up. He was hidden by a tall palm, and thought he would surprise them. She looked all right now—a radiant, dainty creature in her heliotrope silk, all veiled in clouds of snowy chiffon. They paused beside the palm, but ere Hillyard could make his presence known some words of the girl's rooted him to the spot with a terrible sense of something having happened.

"You are right, Willie, I *have* avoided Mr. Hillyard; I've been doing that all the evening," she said quietly.

"But, good heavens, Loo, *why*? You seemed to do the very reverse of that before," said her brother vehemently. "What ails you at him?"

"I can't explain, Willie. I simply loathe and detest him. To be near him hurts—sickens me," she answered, her sensitive lips trembling with emotion.

"Do you like his friend, then, Severn Lyall?" the young man asked curtly, evidently puzzled.

"Very much, indeed. He is a frank, open-hearted soldier," she answered promptly.

"Well, all I can say is, that I can't understand you, Louisa, and I think you must have taken leave of your senses," Derwent remarked, as they moved on.

Hillyard leant against the wall behind the palm, his heart beating with great, heavy throbs. It seemed to strike the hidden dagger with sullen blows, each blow a knell of departed hope. He loved Louisa Derwent, and had been led to believe his passion returned, and this rude awakening was all the more bitter. He took the first chance of slipping away unseen without waiting to speak to Lyall or Derwent, seeing as he went out the sinister-looking foreigner watching him. With a muttered malediction on the man's curiosity, he sped rapidly away in the darkness, not waiting for a cab. Once or twice on his homeward way he fancied he was being followed, and turned to look behind lest the tawny foreigner should be dogging his steps. But he saw no one, and the tumult of his feelings had not subsided when he let himself into his chambers soon after midnight.

Woods had made up the fire before going to bed; the

flames darted merrily, shewing the room tidied up, the table free of litter. David laid his coat and vest upon the table and sat wrapped in his dressing-gown, thinking bitterly. Of what use now was the rare and beautiful legacy? Louisa was lost to him; she would not care for it. He dropped his head between his hands, a deep groan of misery escaping from him, and sat motionless for many minutes.

But hark! What was that? He raised his head and listened. Yes; there it was again—that curious, monotonous music for which he could find no name. Was his new neighbour mad, that he should choose to play after his fellow-residents in the flat were mostly asleep? David groaned again, and was resuming his former attitude when his eyes turned to the table where he had thrown his clothes, and his gaze became rivetted, fixed, a dumb, awful terror holding it there. He had not taken the tiny dagger from his secret pocket, yet there it lay upon the table, the light from the hearth causing the jewels to sparkle brilliantly. The blade was towards him—a line of silver on the dark cloth. He saw the yellow flash of the diamond eyes, the red gleam of the great carbuncles. From the countless gems on the mottled back of the lizard, fiery rays shot forth, quivering, rising and falling as though the creature breathed or moved. Fascinated, the young man stared, terrible thoughts of hatred, revenge, and cruelty holding him spellbound. Why should he not use the dagger to avenge the wrong Severn Lyall had done him in stealing Louisa Derwent's love? It would be safe and sure. Nobody but Lyall knew he had the thing; he had never shewn it to Derwent. No suspicion could attach to him. His fingers clenched fiercely, as if they closed on that loathsome, glittering temptation. He half stretched his hand to grasp the hilt. Then a hoarse, inarticulate cry broke from him, he recoiled farther, his eyes starting, clammy drops gathering on his livid face. Horrible! Monstrous! The creature was moving—crawling nearer the edge of the table, its fore-limbs working, its body wriggling, slowly but surely creeping to reach him. He watched in a dumb anguish, strangely

mingled with a feeling of exultant triumph, as if he already knew the awful deed of blood accomplished. There ; it had got beyond the ink-stain on the cloth. It was nearing the edge. He knew what would happen when it fell over. The blade would bend, rebound from the floor, and the impetus would throw the weapon upon his knees. He saw it all as it would occur. The point was past the table's edge now, the swimming, wriggling motion would topple it over in another moment. There—it was trembling on the verge ; but with a yell he bounded to his feet, springing backward as he did so. There was a flash of lurid light before his eyes, a crash as he lost his balance, a dull thud as he fell, striking his head heavily, and then he lay motionless, stunned and helpless.

When, faint and giddy, he staggered to his feet, the fire had died into ashes, the chill of the winter night made him shiver, his limbs felt stiff and deadly cold, but his head and heart seemed on fire. He did not look at the table, he did not glance at the floor. He walked to the hearth, and sat there all through the dark hours gazing straight before him, a strange smile upon his face. He never once stirred till he heard Woods rattling the breakfast cups in the pantry. Then he rose, lifted his clothes from the table, and went quietly into his bedroom. But when he had washed and dressed he took from the pocket of his dressing-gown the sheathed Darrah dagger, and hid it once more in his breast.

That same afternoon William Derwent sat talking to his friends, Captain Lyall and Dr. Edger, in the editor's room of a well-known journal. Derwent was sub-editor; his chief being ill, he was in charge. They were discussing the "At Home" of the previous evening.

"I wish I had seen Hillyard," remarked Lyall; "he must have been detained, for I couldn't see him."

"He left early. I scarcely spoke to him," answered Derwent. "By the way, Lyall, what do you think of him?"

"He's a capital fellow. I like him immensely," was the hearty response. "Have you seen his valuable

legacy, the famous Darrah dagger? I brought it over to him."

"No; what sort of thing is it?" asked Derwent, with interest.

But a tap at the door, and the entrance of a messenger, prevented an immediate reply.

"This is Mr. Hillyard's article, I suppose, Coles?" Derwent said, looking round.

"Yes, Sir, all he had ready; the other half will be in time, though; it's to be sent for in half an hour," answered the lad.

"Well, call for it then," said Derwent, signing him to go.

But the boy hesitated.

"If you please, Sir, could Nixon go? I—I had rather go home, Sir," he faltered, and Derwent looked at him sharply.

Coles was very pale. Derwent was sorry.

"If you're not well, lad, let Nixon go by all means; but you'll have to take his place for an hour, perhaps, as we're short-handed this week, you know."

The lad bowed and retired. As he disappeared the Doctor, who had been silent hitherto, suddenly spoke.

"That young fellow would be a perfect god send to the Psychical Research Society," he said drily.

"Why, what do you mean, Edger?" demanded Derwent.

"What I say. That messenger boy of yours has the true psychical temperament—high strung, nervous, imaginative; the sort of fellow, in fact, who, had he lived in ancient times would, as the old prophet tells us of some others like him, 'have dreamed dreams and seen visions,'" replied the Doctor calmly.

"How can you make that out, you never saw the lad before?" was the astonished enquiry of Derwent.

"By his eyes," said the Doctor. "Eyes with that sort of pupil always go with such a temperament, and what is more I venture to assert that the boy has got a fright, has seen or heard something beyond *our* ken. I am not mistaken, I know what I am talking about."

The two men listening remained silent, Lyall had started at first, then had apparently fallen into a profound reverie, his head bent, his arms folded. Derwent had started too, but had kept his gaze fixed upon the doctor, his face expressing various acute emotions. He had not recovered his usual bright manner when his friends left him, and their departure was the signal for a deeper shadow to fall.

"That was just the way Louisa looked last night and her eyes have pupils like that," he muttered. "She had seen Hillyard, Coles had just come from him. Good heavens! what can it mean? Can an evil influence emanate from him? There must be something in what Edger says; he is not the man to speak rashly, or for mere effect. I wonder if Coles will tell if I ask——?"

His meditations were interrupted; Lyall had returned and stood at his elbow looking grave and troubled.

"I've come back to tell you about Hillyard's legacy, the dagger I brought over," he said in low tones. "You'll think me mad, Derwent, but there's some devil's work going on at Hillyard's. I can't tell why I think so, I can't say what it might be. I brought him an ancient Indian weapon, a legacy from his cousin my old companion in the regiment, to whom it was left by a brother officer, a legacy also. Both these men died by their own hands, though I have not let Hillyard know *that*. The natives believe the dagger is an evil spirit; Captain Archibald's Irish servant warned me against it, *he* thinks it is bewitched. I spoke of all that, but Hillyard laughed at the idea as I did myself; but I don't laugh now after what Edger said."

The two looked at each other in horrified silence for a few minutes. Then Derwent spoke, his voice strange and hollow to his own ears.

"Let us find Coles; then we'll go to Hillyard's together."

But the lad was not on the premises, he had gone home and none of the workmen knew where his home was.

"You see, Sir, I think he's had a scare by being nearly

run over or something," said the foreman, in apology for the boy's absence. "He's a nervous chap, though really plucky enough ; but he looked bad, so I sent him off. He'll be all right to-morrow, no doubt."

But might to-morrow not be too late ? As they went out into the street the friends asked the question anxiously.

"Come, let us go to my lodgings, Derwent, and after dinner we'll look in at Hillyard's," said the soldier. "We must settle upon some plan of action, you know. Besides, I want to tell you of some queer experiences of my own, to show you that these Hindoos really know some very strange secrets."

"All right," answered Derwent promptly. "But see; there's Nixon whistling like a blackbird. No fear of *him* being a subject suited for occult discovery. There is about as much of the medium about him as there is in a wooden post." He hailed the boy as he spoke.

"Did you see Mr. Hillyard?" he inquired.

"No, Sir ; his man said he was engaged. I think he had company, for I heard queer music," was the answer.

"He must be all right," said Derwent, as they resumed their way. "Don't you think so, Lyall?"

"I don't know. I can't say," answered the Captain, absently. He seemed to be thinking of something else.

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### CHAPTER III.

As they went on Derwent spoke of his sister's sudden antipathy to Hillyard, and Lyall listened, but made no comment.

"I wish Bannerman was here," he observed, after his friend stopped speaking.

"Who is Bannerman?" asked Derwent, surprised at the irrelevant remark, as he thought it.

"The Irish servant I told you of, who thinks the dagger is bewitched. No one knows what he knows. He might help us if he was available," answered the



Captain gloomily, and nothing more was said till they reached his rooms.

The sitting-room was dark, the fire very low, for, as the Captain dined at his club, his servant had not yet made things ready for his coming. As they entered a tall figure rose suddenly from behind the door.

"Why—what—who are you?" demanded Lyall, with angry vehemence. His nerves were strained just then.

"It's me, Capting, jewel—Bannerman. I ask yer pardon, Sir, for making bold to come without an invitation," answered the intruder, in an accent there was no mistaking.

"What! the very man I wanted and was wishing about ten minutes ago," cried Lyall, as he seized the newcomer and shook him for sheer delight.

He lit the gas and Bannerman stood revealed—a tall, grizzled soldier, with a brown face and frank grey eyes. He was smiling in the immovably good-natured manner so characteristic of the true Irishman.

"Sure, and it's proud I am, Capting, of your hearty welcome," he said with intense gratification. "But what, if I may be so curious as to ask, were ye wishing to see me for? If it's anything I can do, ye know me already, Sir."

Lyall paused for a moment before he answered. But he soon decided; as Bannerman had said, he knew him, and he did not beat about the bush.

"Its about the Darrah lizard," he answered quietly.

They had been prepared for the soldier's surprise, but certainly not for the extraordinary effect of the Captain's words. The man had been standing in the stiff attitude a long military training had rendered customary. But now, with a hoarse cry, he actually bounded from the floor, falling back heavily into a chair, his face had turned to a ghastly yellow—white with horror. As the two startled friends hastened towards him, he made a strong effort at self-control, and succeeded. He was evidently a man who could exercise a wonderful restraint over his feelings.

"Holy Vargin!" he ejaculated. "The Saints be

between us and all harm! Would yer honour just tell me what has happened? I'll mayhap be better able to give ye some notion o' what to do then. Tell me all ye know, Sir."

"It's not much, Bannerman, but it's disquieting," said Lyall. "A thousand times have I wished I had taken your advice and asked Mr. Hillyard to destroy the thing—not that he would have listened if I had," he added.

"Not likely, Sir! None o' them did," said Bannerman grimly.

The Captain told all he knew—Hillyard's pleasure and delight over the rare weapon:—Miss Derwent's unaccountable aversion, the messenger lad's evident terror, and what the doctor had said about the latter. Yet when all was said, it seemed so little, so paltry, he almost expected to hear the soldier laugh. Instead, Bannerman was perfectly grave, his face had not recovered its naturally florid hue.

"Now! What do you make of it, Bannerman? It seems precious little to be uneasy about, yet I *am* uneasy," he observed in conclusion.

The man looked up with strange solemnity.

"I'll tell you and your friend *my* story, Sir, then you'll see whether your fears are ridiculous or not," he said, without a smile. "It may be the little things—one by one—that make the big whole so terrible, an' I did not learn all at once, no more nor you, Sir."

The man spoke well; when in deep earnest, he had very little of the brogue, his post as officer's servant had, most likely, helped to render his speech more refined. He took the glass of spirits offered him and began very quietly.

"It's about two years now since Major Owen went up to see to some bother or other in a small State pretty far from headquarters, and, of course, I went with the regiment. We hadn't much to do, and the civilian who had been the Government representative got very intimate with the Major. He was a Mr. Kennedy—a Scotchman. One night, while waiting on the two at dinner, I heard

him tell my master he had got a present from His Highness, and he was glad, for there had been a row about some of the Palace women running away, and he had been in disgrace for helping them to reach the nearest Mission in safety. He had been describing it, and Major Owen said, laughing, he might will it to *him*, and Mr. Kennedy laughed and promised, saying he had nobody belonging to him at home to give it to. None of the native servants were about, so they talked quite freely. After dinner, I wondered where all the brown rascals had gone, till I came upon the whole tribe of them gathered round Mr. Kennedy's bearers, all talking and looking furiously excited. I knew their lingo pretty well, and before they saw me I caught a sentence or two that made me feel rather uncomfortable. They were predicting some fearful punishment to be inflicted upon some Sahib who had offended the Rajah, but what the punishment was, or who the Sahib, I could not discover, for the rascals spotted me coming and scattered. A night or two after, I saw Mr. Kennedy again, and I hardly knew him. He had been a big, strong, resolute man when he came, now he was but a shadow—and the fear in his eyes! Well, I have seen it since in other eyes, and it has turned me sick and cold. It's a terrible thing to see *fear* in the face of a brave man, Sir; it's worse than to see death. If you've ever seen it, you'll know how Mr. Kennedy looked. He did not speak, but I think he saw what I felt. I could not get that look of his out of my mind. I had no chance that night of telling the Major; he was writing despatches and letters and never sent for me. After a while I slipped away to Mr. Kennedy's bungalow, for that look was a-fretting me; I wanted to see if I could be any help to him. Not a house servant was about, the place was silent and dark but for a light in Mr. Kennedy's own room. Something made me go round the verandah and look in, for, you see, I was fancying all sorts of trouble. He was sitting by the table, and lying before him, on the green cover, was the brightest, beautifullest creature of a lizard I had ever seen. He was watching it as it began to move over towards him, it's motion the queerest that

could be imagined. It wriggled, using only its outspread fore-legs, its tail being twisted over its hind ones. It sparkled and flashed like living fire ; it was wonderful and strange to look at. It crept slowly, but as it neared his hand Mr. Kennedy sprang up with a yell of horror and saw me. I was in the room before I knew it ; his cry had been so awful. I thought he'd been bitten. He met me quite calmly, but with that terrible look in his eyes, and I asked his pardon for intruding. He signed me to come near, and then I saw that what I had taken for a living creature was the handle of a small *teeny* dagger all set with jewels, the like of which I had never seen before. Mr. Kennedy, with that strange look, touched it with the paper-cutter.

“ ‘ That is a priceless and wonderful dagger,’ he said ; ‘ your master wants it, but when he gets it tell him to destroy it, Bannerman. If he does not destroy *it*, it will destroy *him*. Remember to tell him that, my man.’ ”

“ Quite upset by my delusion of having seen it move, and sorry for the poor gentleman, I went back to my quarters, not seeing Major Owen that night again. Next day there was an upset to us all. Poor Mr. Kennedy had been found dead that morning early, poisoned, it was suspected. But *I* never thought so, for I saw him before they buried him. And his eyes were wide open, with that awful fear in them till the coffin-lid hid their horror. His things were sold, but the dagger was not found, so Major Owen could not claim it. I did not tell them what Mr. Kennedy had said to me. I saw no reason, as the dagger was gone. I wish I'd spoken, but I don't suppose it would have altered matters, as they fell out later.

“ We had got to wait till Mr. Kennedy's successor came, and Major Owen took the duty for the time. The Rajah often sent for him, and I generally attended him to the Palace. The Major was very handsome. I used to think the veiled ladies of the court admired him, though of course he took no notice himself.

“ The Rajah was very old, but he fawned on my master, and pretended to like him very much. One night he

came back from Captain Archibald Hillyard's, a man brushed past us as we entered the bungalow. I could neither see him clearly nor stop him. I only saw his face, and it was a strange one, both in features and expression. Then I heard my master call for me quick and joyful like. He was by his dressing-table, holding in his hand the very dagger I had seen before. He was wild with joy.

" 'It's my legacy, Bannerman,' he cried; 'the dagger that was lost. Some of these Hindoos really have consciences after all.'

" And he held it up and made it flash and glitter. My heart stood still; I felt quite stupid for a minute. Then I spoke. I told him the message I was to give him. He gave a scornful laugh when I finished.

" 'Why didn't you tell me when Mr. Kennedy gave you the message?' he cried, angrily, and though I explained and implored, he would not listen.

" The thing had bewitched him I saw, and I was nearly mad myself, for I knew he was doomed.

" Next day he had forgot his temper, but I thought he looked often at me, but he said nothing till the day after.

" 'I'll be gone two days, Bannerman,' he said. 'Take care of this for me, will you?'

" And he laid the cursed lizard on his desk with a look as though he hated it. I saw him off with Captain Hillyard, then went to look up the dagger; but it was gone. I could not find it high or low. I was in a terrible taking, sure that he would accuse me of making away with it, as poor Mr. Kennedy wished. But a cold horror came over me when he came back. He walked straight in, and sat down like a man who is took for death, and I felt like death myself when he drew that fearsome creature from the breast pocket of his coat, and laid it down with a groan.

" 'It's all up with me, Bannerman, my faithful fellow,' he said in a low hollow tone, and when I ran to him he just laid his head against me and fainted like a girl. I brought him round, then I turned to take the thing and smash it before his eyes. But it was not where he laid it, and he just gave a strange sad smile when I looked



round, pointing to his inner pocket, and there that awful bewitched thing was. I saw the sparkle of its wicked eyes just inside his vest. I think my grief made me desperate. I snatched at it, and flung it as far as I could, and the fine-tempered blade bent quite double, and sprang back with the rebound on to his very knee.

"I shall never forget the look he gave me, so despairing it was.

"‘It’s the vengeance of the Rajah,’ he muttered. ‘Bannerman, when I’m gone don’t let anybody claim it as a keepsake; it’s when the cursed thing is claimed it carries its horrible power with it. You won’t let any one take it as a keepsake in remembrance of me?’

"And I promised, but I could not keep the promise.

"Major Owen died next night, he was thrown from his horse; he had lost his nerve with want of sleep and constant horror of the devilish dagger. He never regained consciousness, and when they sent for me he was dead, and Captain Archie Hillyard stood beside him. Even then I remembered his charge. I put my hand in his breast-pocket. ‘You’ll excuse me, Captain, but there’s something here my dear master wants me to destroy,’ I said, feeling wildly for the dagger. And he just held it out to me, saying quietly, ‘I asked him before he died if he’d give this to me, and I understood that I was to keep it.’ So there was another victim, I knew, and I just then and there told the Captain the story of the bewitched lizard, and, like my master, he listened and did not believe. I saw that he thought I wanted the thing for myself, so I said no more. There was some talk of the Major having thrown himself from the saddle as his horse jumped the nullah, but Captain Hillyard did not say so to me, and he was with him at the time.

"The funeral, of course, was at early morning. The firing-party had just gone, and I was patting the horse that would never carry my master again, when some one touched my arm. It was Captain Hillyard.

"‘Bannerman, my good fellow, I was rude to you last night,’ he said very sadly, ‘I ask your pardon for it, and if you care to enter my service I’ll take you at once.



You were faithful to *him*, I think you'll be faithful to me. Will you come?'

"I looked at him, and that decided me, for God help him (I thought) there was the look in his eyes I had seen twice before, the look of despairing horror that I can't describe.

"I followed him straight to his quarters, and once there my new master shut the door and took my hand. His own trembled like a leaf.

"'You were right, Bannerman; it should have been destroyed, and I have kept it, to the losing of my soul, perhaps,' he cried hoarse and low, like a man driven to the last extremity. 'Bannerman, help me! Stay with me! Never let me be alone. Help me to fight the devil for my own salvation—my life here, my life hereafter!'

"Great drops stood on his face, his eyes grew wilder, and he stared at a corner like one possessed. I looked where he looked, and whether it was fancy or reality I dare not say, but for a moment I seemed to see the face of the man who had been seen on the night Major Owen found the dagger.

"I did my best to keep my promise. I never left my new master unless some of the other officers were with him; and all the time I felt how useless it was—felt the cursed thing taking a firmer hold of his senses day by day. But perhaps my vigilance and his own high courage merely delayed the catastrophe.

"One morning I went for his cup of coffee, and was kept a few minutes longer than usual. On getting back I was just in time to see a hideous brown face pass between me and the bed, to hear a blood-curdling shriek, and then the dull thud of the devil's dagger as it fell from the bed to the floor, every jewel glowing like a flame of hell.

"That's all, Sir; but how is the story to end now that the evil creature is here in England?"

## CHAPTER IV.

BANNERMAN concluded, wiping his damp forehead with an unsteady hand. Lyall was the first to speak.

"What's your advice, Bannerman? Can you suggest any course to pursue?" he asked anxiously, for no comment could be made. The man's story was the simple, appalling truth—they all felt *that*.

"I think, Sir, the boy's our best resource; "we must take him with us," answered Bannerman, earnestly.

"What! Coles?" cried Derwent. "We can't get him. We don't know where he lives.

The soldier started violently; a sudden light leapt into his face.

"Is it Dicky Coles you say, Sir?" he cried excitedly.

"I believe his name is Richard," said Derwent. "His father was a soldier too, he told me."

Bannerman struck his palms together with a cry.

"There's a providence in it, Sir," he exclaimed. "It's my sister's son, my own nephew, I'll wager. A queer boy he is, his mother says, and I've noticed it myself; but he's the right sort, too. Why, I'm living with them. I'll fetch him along, and we'll go to the gentleman all together."

"I'll go for the lad with you," said Derwent. "He knows me, and may come more readily. It is a providence."

"All right, Sir! It's not very far," said Bannerman, turning at once to go with military promptitude.

"I hope Dicky hasn't gone to bed; he's been queer for a few days," remarked Bannerman as they walked along.

"He was upset. I trust he won't refuse to come when we're all with him," said Derwent anxiously.

"He's peculiar, Sir, but he's a good lad; he will come I'm sure." Bannerman spoke confidently.

"The psychical temperament is not cowardly, quite the reverse as a rule," observed Derwent.

"That's true, Sir. Bless my life. I do believe that's Dick!" cried the soldier, pouncing upon a passing figure—"Coles!"

"Why, Coles, we were seeking you. Where are you going?" cried Derwent, astonished and relieved to find the boy.

"To Mr. Hillyard's, Sir. I ought to have gone back instead of coming home. I think he needs me."

The simple answer showed that he had some definite purpose in going.

"That's where we want to take you; we know he needs you. We understand; so no explanation is necessary," Derwent said gravely. "Your uncle, Captain Lyall, and I are all going."

The lad looked up steadily. That subtle instinct that speaks stronger than words flashed between the two. The youthful face had an expression of high resolve.

"I am quite ready, Sir. I cannot resist going; I feel I may help Mr. Hillyard. I think he's in awful trouble," he said rapidly and earnestly. "Oh! I am glad you can understand," he added.

And for answer, Derwent laid a hand on his shoulder saying:

"Come along."

Lyall waited for their return. He paced the room, too restless to sit down. What an awful revelation it had been! Each scene described a fresh link in the fiery chain of hatred, cruelty and revenge forged by the subtle Oriental. What fearful consequences might result from his own honourable action in bringing the fatal dagger to his dead friend's only kinsman? That the weapon possessed some occult power he could not doubt, but what that power was, or whence derived, he dared not strive to solve. That Hillyard was doomed to perish, as the others had perished, unless some stronger influence should counteract the baneful effect of that evil creature, he knew, and the bewilderment, the utter helplessness of the position forced itself upon him more and more as the minutes passed. He had been pacing with eyes moodily downcast, but a sudden impulse caused him to

lift them for an instant, and they did not fall again. Standing facing him with back against the door, and hand thrust into the breast-pocket of his overcoat, was David Hillyard, with an ugly sneer upon his lips, and the cunning, furtive light of insanity in his eyes. In that swift glance Lyall realised at once both his unhappy friend's state and his own danger. But with the knowledge came also the coolness and resolution to cope with it, for he knew that the devil-posessed dagger was doing its diabolical work. As he fixed his firm gaze on Hillyard the madman's eyes grew wilder, his sneer more savage.

"Now, which is it to be, you or I?" he hissed furiously, advancing a step, "answer, you traitor; which is it to be?"

"Well, neither of us I should say," answered Lyall calmly. "Why should it be either you or I, Hillyard?" He could not understand what was meant, but his plan was to keep the poor fellow quiet till the other came back. His answer seemed to raise a fiercer gust of fury.

"You lie, you coward, you lie," he cried hoarsely. "It was I until you stole her from me. You knew she was mine—mine—and you came between us. But I'll have my revenge, I know I shall." And his voice sank away into a low chuckling laugh horrible to hear.

Lyall had no clue to what the poor fellow meant. He must answer, however; he dared not pause with that murderous gaze upon him.

"She would not have me, she said she hated me," he said, quietly standing quite still. The maniac gave a shrill, discordant laugh, a wild caper of delight.

"Ha—ha—ha! she said that of me too" he cried. "Now we're quits, and you'll come with me, for I must kill her—kill her—kill her," he yelled, and snatched from his breast the terrible dagger, brandishing it aloft, the blade quivering tongue-like, the yellow diamonds and red carbuncles winking, gleaming with life-like ferocity. A sick loathing overcame Lyall, he recoiled a step. Hillyard laughed again.

"Look," he cried, "it will creep into her breast, it

will whisper its secrets, she will listen and understand, and then——” He broke off, laying the lizard softly down on the table, bending over it, his ear close to the creature’s head, his hand raised as if to bespeak attention, and through the room seemed to float a low, soft murmur as of a sea-shell, a sweet, faint sound, wonderful yet terrifying in its very beauty, for it was like nothing earthly.

“The Soul of the Brahmin, the mighty, the strong, whose power has never been broken, who shall be unconquered till the world shall shrivel up as a scroll in the fire,” he shrieked, wildly pointing to the creature that glowed and flashed till Lyall’s fascinated eyes ached, and he closed them for a moment half blinded. But he opened them quickly, the light had ceased to glare, the deadly grip of horror at his heart relaxed, he knew that the expected trio were in the room. There was no pause, no hesitation. He saw a thin boyish hand reach over and grasp the jewelled lizard, heard a ringing boyish voice speak slowly, clearly. Every sentence dropped like a prayer for victory.

“No; this power shall not endure; it shall pass like a breath that vanishes for ever. Let the uncleansed soul of the wicked priest return to the devil who sent it back to earth. It shall ruin men no more.”

There was a sensation as of the rushing past of a hot, suffocating wind, a choking cry from Hillyard as he fell prone upon his face. But the other men had no sense, no sight for aught but the demon-possessed lizard and the boy who held it. At first he had grasped it by the body, but he shifted his hand to the tip of the blade-tongue, holding his arm straight out, his eyes fixed steadily upon a spot near the prostrate man. The boyish face was transfigured, lit by the resolve of a noble purpose. Whatever his terror might have been, it was gone. He had braced himself for his conflict with the powers of evil, and there could be no turning back. As they listened they were conscious of the presence of a pure, innocent soul, against which the waves of doubt, of falsehood, of base, grovelling human passions, might beat



in vain. They stood before a loftier nature than their own, a spirit whose white garment would remain unsullied until the mortal put on immortality.

"Take it back!" he cried, "take it back in the name of a God before whom your gods are but lying devils, working despair and death upon His creatures! Take it back, I say! Send the unrepentant soul of the Brahmin Norammah to his own place."

He stopped, and the steel blade seemed to thrill as if struck violently. Rays of vivid scarlet shot up and down its length; it trembled with the curious singing sound Lyall had produced when he bent it. But it was upon the lizard hilt that the strangest, most weird effect was seen. For a brief space it actually seemed to writhe with rage; its fore limbs worked convulsively, its slim body swelled and panted rapidly, every jewel threw out its own special lustre with tenfold intensity. The red fury in the great carbuncles, the yellow glare in the cat's-eye diamonds, transfixed the spectators with a nameless dread. But the awful struggle (or effect) did not last long. The creature seemed to gather itself together as if for some supreme effort; there was a loud hissing sound, a lurid flash as of forked lightning, and the thing lay where the lad placed it, beautiful indeed, but with a something gone from it, a something that would never live and burn in its magnificent gems again. And the lad turned to the men like a young Galahad who had won a great but expected victory, and said simply:

"I was foolish to be frightened before, for I knew that the evil spirit could not harm me."

"Did you see it, the demon that could enter into that weapon hilt at will?" asked Derwent some time later, when Hillyard, restored to consciousness and in his right mind, lay exhausted in Lyall's easy-chair with the rest standing by.

"Yes, quite plainly," answered Coles. "But I saw him before going up to Mr. Hillyard's chambers—a tall, brown old man with a strange red mark upon his brow. He had a dreadful face—it was that that frightened me, Sir."



"I saw him myself on the night of the Granger's party. He was always behind me watching," said Hillyard, quietly.

"I've seen him three times, the last time on the morning of poor Captain Archibald's death. But I did not see him just now though," was Bannerman's testimony.

"I have never seen him, and I pray heaven I never may," muttered Lyall, under his breath, with a shiver.

"What an awful experience it has been. Would any one outside this circle believe me, I wonder, if I told my story?" said Hillyard, with a glance round.

"Would anyone believe *me*, Sir, if I told mine? Or the boy either, for that matter? Yet he has seen, and wrestled with, and overcome the powers of evil before our mortal sight," said Bannerman, with grim irony. "The world is hard to convince, Sir; it only believes if it sees a thing *done*, and sometimes not even then."

"Edger would believe, and I feel that my sister would," said Derwent. "But I do not intend to tell her," he added, with a peculiar shadow on his face, as he remembered the effect of the lizard on Louisa.

\* \* \* \*

"Why, David, you never told me about this. It is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen; it is simply exquisite, and must be worth thousands of pounds with all those lovely jewels. I've a fancy to wear it in my hair to-night at the Granger's ball. That is, if you don't object."

Mrs. Hillyard, like most young brides, was curious to see her husband's belongings. Their honeymoon trip had just terminated, and she had been busy rummaging in David's escritoire. Her husband looked up to find her with the lizard dagger in her hand.

"Yes, it is both beautiful and valuable," he said, slowly. "but that handle represents such a deadly creature, I should not like to see it on you as an ornament, Louisa. Besides, it was poor Archie's legacy, and his fate was such a tragic one, I can't help being reminded of it when I see that thing."

Hillyard was strongly moved. His young wife hastened to console him, annoyed at her own want of thought.

"I'm sorry I found it, Davie dear, and it was stupid of me to want to use it in my hair. Of course, it must be painful for you to look at it. You are quite right; I ought not to wear it." She put it back softly, and closed the secret drawer as she spoke, "Oh! Bannerman," she cried, as a stalwart commissionaire was ushered into the room, "is that lovely bouquet from Captain Lyall? How nice of him to remember the ball. His taste in bouquets is perfect."

She buried her pretty face in the fragrant blossoms while her husband and Bannerman, who had overheard the little conversation as he entered, exchanged a rapid and meaning glance.

JANET A. McCULLOCH.